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533 Another native of Skidaway,* now living in Sandfly, also
202 remembered drum codes being sent out from Skidaway.[26] A
[115] member of the Baptist Church, he has never heard drums beaten in the house of praise, but he described with great pride and earnestness the ceremony of a river baptism.

•795 "We gadduh at duh chuch wid duh candidates who comes
796 all dressed ready fuh baptism in long wite robes. Duh deacons range duh folks in line, two by two. Den duh mahch tuh duh ribbuh begin, duh pastuh an duh deacons leadin duh way. Dis is a solemn time, an duh candidates an deah friens
[533] an relatives all rejoice. As we mahch we sing. Some uh duh songs we sing is *I'm Gwine Down tuh duh Ribbuh ub Jawdan* an *Oh, Who Will Come an Go Wid Me?*

"Wen we git tuh duh ribbuh some uh duh folks is so happy an dey scream an jump roun so much dat some uh duh uddubs hab tuh hole em. Duh candidates is led intuh duh watuh, one by one, an baptize. Attuh duh baptizin dey change deah cloze an we all go tuh duh chuch fuh duh communion services."

754 Here, as in many other sections, a silver coin is frequently
301 worn on the ankle to insure good luck[a] and to give warning
789 by turning black at any effort by an enemy to conjure the
[779] wearer.[12a, c, d] In regard to this custom of wearing a coin one woman who is married to a man "wid duh powuh tuh see tings"[22a,•] said, "Duh folks roun yuh use tuh weah five dolluh gole pieces on deah ankle, but hahd times jis nachly make dem gole pieces jump off." ••

The same woman told that when she and her husband first moved to Sandfly several years ago, a neighbor employed a conjure man to put a spell on them to drive them away.

"I membuh wen deze folks cross duh way wuz cunjuhin us, an strikin roun, I went tuh duh sto an change a dolluh bill fuh one of deze silvuh dolluhs. It wuz roun an shiny as yuh

* *John Bivens, Baker's Crossing.*
** *Lee Baynes, Sandfly.*

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Sunbury

OUR CAR CAME TO AN ABRUPT STOP IN THE SANDY road before the board fence which enclosed a small group of weather-beaten clapboard houses. We called to a young Negro girl who lounged in a doorway and she came forward to see what we wanted. Almost simultaneously there appeared from the other houses scattered about the clearing a number of other persons.

Two women about thirty-five years old and nine or ten small children all approached the fence. At first they were rather wary, but their attitude gradually turned to friendliness and they hung over the high board fence, talking and laughing in great good humor. Elizabeth Roberts,* the young girl whom we had first seen, appeared to be the leader of the group.

We were interested to know if these people had river baptisms any more. "Duh Sunbury Baptis Church an duh Palmyra Baptis Church both hab baptizins," Elizabeth told us. "Cose it depend on how many folks wants tuh leab duh Presbyterian Church an jine duh Baptis. Mos ub us is already baptize."

"Where do they hold the baptisms?" we inquired.

The group all pointed in the direction of the river. "Right obuh deah in duh Sunbury Ribbuh," they chorused.

Elizabeth again took the initiative. "All duh candidates is robed in wite," she explained. "Duh preachuh come frum

* *Elizabeth Roberts, Sunbury.*

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795 796 (292) (783) Savannah an he is dressed in a long robe. He walk long an duh folks all mahch behine im. Dey goes down tuh duh ribbuh an sing as dey go. Dey alluz hab duh baptizin wen duh tide is goin out so duh watuh will wash duh sins away. Attuh dey all gits tuh duh ribbuh, dey stop an duh preachuh ast duh candidates tuh step fawwud. One by one he dip em in duh watuh an dey is buried in baptism. Wen dey is all baptize, duh preachuh pray tuh duh ribbuh an [63] ast dat all sins be taken away. Den all duh folks sing an shout an praise duh Lawd."

The little group leaning on the railing nodded in agreement and as if in memory of the ceremony their bodies swayed rhythmically. As we listened and watched we could almost see the white robed procession winding to the river bank; we could almost hear the chanting of the converts as their sins were washed away.

764 The conversation turned to burial customs in the section and the women told us that "settin-ups" were still held for those who died.

"We all sit wid duh body an sing an pray an keep duh spirit company," said one of them.

(777) Another added, "At duh fewnul we sing an we puts our hands on duh cawpse tuh say goodbye. It bad luck not tuh do dis." [31]

We had heard in other communities that in case of death away from home the body is brought back to its native town for burial. This custom is also prevalent in Sunbury, we learned.

(609) "Ebrybody wannuh be buried in deah own town," [1] Elizabeth said. "An we nebuh bury strainjuhs wid our own folks. Ef a strainjuh die yuh, we bury em in duh strainjuh's lot." [8]

795 Emma Stevens,* tall and slim, a baby in her arms and several small children gathered about her, spoke up, "Yuh got

* *Emma Stevens, Sunbury.*

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285 of large round baskets, about twenty inches in diameter, with matching covers that fitted well down over the rim. Isaac used bulrushes and grasses for his material and worked with a sure deft touch that insured sturdy construction.

533 534 [202] He remembered that drums had been used for a variety of purposes during his youth. He said, "I use tuh dance tuh duh drum.[25] I recall wen dey beat duh drum tuh call duh people on Harris Neck tuhgedduh fuh a dance aw fewnul.[26] Cose, dey hab a diffunt beat wen dey call um tuh a settin-up aw fewnul frum duh one dey use tuh call um tuh a dance.

534 764 Deah wuz two kine uh drum. One dey call duh kittle drum, an one wuz duh bass drum. It stan bout two an a half foot high. Dey use tuh alluz hab a settin-up wen somebody die. Wen folks would go tuh duh settin-up, dey would gib um bread an coffee.[27b, c]

795 796 [782] "Dey still hole ribbuh baptisms yuh. Dey git tuh duh ribbuh an attuh dey pray an sing up on duh bank, duh preachuh take duh candidates down in duh ribbuh. Fo he baptize each ub um, he say a prayuh tuh duh ribbuh an ax fuh all duh sins tuh be wash away."[63]

795 Remembering what we had been told about the haunted road to Maringo, we questioned Isaac and he said, "Yes'm, I hab heah bout duh hanted road tuh Maringo on duh Young Man Road. Lots uh folks say deah is spirits roun deah.[59] Wen yuh try tuh pass duh fawk in duh road, duh spirits stop yuh sometime an wohn let yuh by. Some uh duh spirits mus be good, fuh Ise heahd one story bout a man who wuz passin by an all ub a sudden his hawse jis stop shawt in his tracks. Jis wouldn go anudduh step. Duh man try an try, but he couldn make duh hawse moob. Den he see a spirit come long an it take hole ub duh hawse bridle an lead him long. Duh hawse go right long. Den duh spirit disappeah. I hab heahd lots uh stories bout dat road but uh nebuh see nuttn muhsef."

115 Our next interview was an unusually delightful one. Sit-

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789 juh on em too. They's made of haiah, an nails,[10] an grave-
754 yahd dut,[9] sometimes from pieces of cloth an string. They tie em all up in a lill bag. Some of em weahs it roun the wrist, some of em weahs it roun the neck,[11b] an some weahs a dime on the ankle. Then ef somebody put down cunjuh fuh em it tun black an[12a, c, d] they git anothuh one tuh wawd off the evil.[6] Some of em has a frizzled chicken in the yahd. People do say they kin dig up cunjuh an keep it frum wukin gense yuh.[13a]

754 "Yuh heah all the time bout folks wut is cunjuhed. They gits crippled up an ef they dohn do nuthin bout it, some of em dies."[15]

• 795 We asked if river baptisms were still held in the section
796 and Liza answered, "Yes'm, they hole the baptisms right down yonduh in the rivuh. They always hole em on the ebb
[783] tide; that's so the sins be washed away. All the pruhcession mahch down tuh the rivuh. The preachuh leads the way. Fus the preachuh stan on the bank an pray. Then he take
[782] the candidates one by one an dip em in the watuh. Then he
[783] make a prayuh fuh the rivuh tuh wash away the sins.[63] I call that prayuh 'the matrinal.'"

Liza was unable to explain just what this term meant, but she said it was always applied to the prayer to the river.
764 She told us, too, that "settin-ups" were held for those who died and that the mourners sat up all night with the body
[533] and sang and prayed. "In the ole days they always use tuh beat the drum at the funeral an they still does it tuhday. As they take the body tuh the graveyahd, they beat the drum as they move long.[24] They put the body in the grave. Then they mahch roun an sing an beat the drum."

759 We had been told that several midwives rendered services to those residing in the section. We asked Liza about this and she told us, "Anna Johnson, she's my sistuh. She's a midwife an she tends tuh lots of folks roun heah. Those
[755] midwifes sho knows wut tuh do.[48] They use a shahp knife

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tings, den duh udduhs in duh fambly will die too. Dey will folluh right long. Folks alluz hab two fewnuls. We hab one wen dey die an den once a yeah we hab a suhvice fuh ebrybody wut died durin duh yeah.[42] Duh preachuh say a prayuh fuhrum all."

From this source we obtained added verification of the fact that river baptisms were still held.

"We alluz baptize on duh ebb tide," said Rosa. "Duh watuh washes duh sin away. Duh preachuh pray up on duh bank an den wen he baptize duh candidate, he pray tuh duh ribbuh tuh take away duh sins."[43]

Later in the conversation the women recalled harvest festivals[39] that had been held many years before. "Dat wuz alluz a big time." Anna's rather somber face lit up at the remembrance of the festive occasion. "Ebrybody bring some ub duh fus crop tuh duh chuch an we prepeahs a big feas. We pray an gib tanks fuh duh crop an pray fuh duh nex yeah. We all eat an sing an dance. One uh duh dances call duh Buzzud Lope.[17] We still dance dat tuhday."

Rosa told us proudly that she was a granddaughter of Katherine Basden who had been recognized as a leader among the Negroes in the section.

"Me an muh brudduh wuz muh granmudduh's favorites," she said. "She alluz said she lak us bettuhn all duh udduh chillun. Wen I wuz only bout twelve yeahs ole, she tell me wen I grow up I would take huh place an carry on duh wuk she wuz doin."

Moving her powerful shoulders in rhythm and clapping her hands together, the woman sang us a song that her grandmother had crooned to new-born babies as she held them in her arms. The words were, for the most part, indistinguishable. Over and over we caught one repeated phrase, "nikki yimi, nikki yimi."

"Muh granmudduh wuz took very sick. She knew she wuz gonuh die. Dat wuz jis wen muh oldes chile wuz bawn.

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764 dey put salt on duh stomach tuh keep it frum purgin. Ebrybody put duh hands on um tuh say good-bye.[31]

[533] "On duh way tuh duh grabe dey beat duh drum as dey is mahchin long.[34] Wen duh body is put in duh grabe, ebrybody shout roun duh grabe in a succle, singin an prayin. Each one trow a hanful uh dut in duh grabe." [38]

527 The conversation shifted to topics of a more cheerful nature and Rachel told us that in former years at harvest time, they had been in the habit of holding "crop suppuhs." [38]

Her face creased itself into a delightful grin and her eyes shone as she told us, "Dat sho wuz a big time. We hab a big feas. All night we shouts an in duh mawnin right at sunrise we pray an bow low tuh duh sun. Muh great-gran—she [782] name Peggy—I membuh she pray ebry day, at sunrise, at noon, an at sunset. She kneel down wen she pray an at duh en she bow low tree times, facin duh sun."

535 Alec's thoughts in the meantime had turned to more trivial affairs. He went on to tell us about the various dances that are popular at the present-day social affairs.

"Cose we do duh Buzzud Lope," [17] he began. "Ebrybody knows dat. Den we alluz does anudduh dance. We calls it 'Come Down tuh duh Myuh.' We dance roun an shake duh han an fiddle duh foot. One ub us kneel down in duh middle uh duh succle. Den we all call out an rise an shout roun, an we all fling duh foot agen."

• 795 In answer to our question about river baptisms the old people informed us that they are still held in the section. 796 Alec described these. "We all sing an pray an duh preachuh pray tuh duh Lord. Cose duh candidate caahn be save less he reely want tuh be. Duh preachuh an duh candidates goes [782] down in duh watuh. Den duh preachuh make a prayuh tuh [783] duh ribbuh an duh ribbuh washes duh sin away." [63]

It is bad luck to eat certain types of food, Rachel told us. 262 This belief had never influenced Rachel or Alec but they 777

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hollowed-out log set on legs served as a watering trough for the ox.

Susan told us about the death of her mother, Rachel La Conte, who had come from Liberty County. "She die right in dis house. Dey measure uh wid a string. Dey beat duh drum tuh tell ebrybody bout duh settin-up.[26] We all set up wid duh body. We hab a big wash pot full uh coffee an hab a big sack uh soda crackuh fuh duh folks.[27b, c] Ebrybody place dey han bery light on uh eahs an on uh nose an den dey say, 'Dohn call me. I ain ready fuh tuh go yit.'[30, 31]

"We bury uh by tawch light attuh dahk. Ebrybody mahch roun duh grabe in a succle. Ebry night attuh duh fewnul I put food on duh poach fuh duh spirit tuh come git it.[56, 58]

"In duh ole days dey beat duh drum tuh call duh people tuh duh fewnul.[24] Dey beat it slow—boom—boom—boom. Wen dey wannuh stuhrup duh folks fuh a dance aw frolic, dey beats duh drum fas. Den dey knows it ain fuh no fewnul an dat it's fuh a good time. Duh people neahby, wen dey heahs it, beats deah drum an das how dey sends a message so udduh folks gits it.[26]

"I kin membuh two kine uh drum. Deah wuz duh lill kittle drum. Hit wuz bout fifteen inches cross an tree an a half foot high. Dat wuz duh drum dey beat fuh a settin-up."

Susan, too, gave us a description of the river baptisms. "Dey baptize in duh watuh down at duh landin. All duh candidates is dressed in wite. Dey all confess deah sins an say dey want tuh be save.

"We all mahch long in a line an sing an pray. Wen we git tuh duh ribbuh bank, we stop an duh preachuh say a long prayuh tuh duh Lawd. Den duh preachuh take duh candidates one by one and dey go down in duh ribbuh. Duh preachuh he say a prayuh tuh duh ribbuh. Dey alluz bap-

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tize on duh ebb tide cuz duh ribbuh is spose tuh wash duh sins away.[65] All duh folks sing a song called *All Muh Sins Done Wash Away.*"

There were several white chickens wandering about the yard and Susan told us that her principal reason for keeping them was that they possessed the power to dig up conjure.[13]

We asked the old woman if she had ever known any Africans, and she said, "I know one man. He name Primus O'Neal. He come frum Africa an he talk funny talk. He call a pot a 'jam.' I membuh he say, 'Lemme cook sumpm fuh nyam.' He mean sumpm fuh tuh eat."

It later developed that this same Primus O'Neal was the grandfather of Rosa Grant * whom we found living in a small gray cottage on the Townsend Road. Rosa was sixty-five years old, with copper-colored skin and rather aquiline features.

We asked about her grandfather and she told us some of the things of which she had heard him speak.

"He tell me dey nebuh hab tuh plant in Africa. Dey gadduh wile okra an palmettuh cabbage fuh food frum duh forres. He tell bout a wine call 'figlin watuh' dat dey drink in Africa. But he nebuh say jis how dey make it.

"Muh gran come frum Africa too. Huh name wuz Ryna. I membuh wen I wuz a chile seein muh gran Ryna pray. Ebry mawnin at sun-up she kneel on duh flo in uh ruhm an bow obuh an tech uh head tuh duh flo tree time. Den she say a prayuh. I dohn membuh jis wut she say, but one wud she say use tuh make us chillun laugh. I membuh it wuz 'ashamnegad.' Wen she finish prayin she say 'Ameen, ameen, ameen.'

"She talk plenty bout cunjuh.[15] Say dat wen a pusson bin made tuh swell up frum a ebil spell, dey got tuh hab somebody tuh pray an drag fuhrum. Ef yuh hab a pain aw

* *Rosa Grant, Townsend Road, Possum Point.*

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Club. We followed the road for about two miles and came finally to a signpost directing us to turn right in order to reach the club. This section in former times had been occupied by extensive plantation holdings. Most of these estates had been deserted for years and now and then we saw a house, once evidently charming but now in a dilapidated and crumbling condition.

Through an old gateway to what had once been a prosperous estate we rode past acres now weed-grown and neglected. At last we came upon a one story white plantation house. Inside blinds were at all of the French windows and the wide floor boards gave indication that the house had probably been standing for about one hundred years.

The man for whom we were looking was plowing in a field at the rear. Baker's rugged build and his keen intellect made it difficult to believe that he was in his late seventies. For years he had acted as caretaker of the club and often lived in the plantation house, as it had been unoccupied for some time.

He had heard of the custom of beating drums to warn people of a recent death. He said, "Dey use tuh alluz beat duh drum aw blow duh hawn wen somebody die.[24] Dey beat two licks on duh drum, den dey stop, den dey beat tree licks. Wen yuh beat dat, yuh know somebody done die.[24, 26] Lots uh duh drums wuz home-made. Dey wuz made out uh goat skin aw coon skin wut stretch out obuh hoops.[25] Deah wuz tree sizes uh drums. Deah wuz duh big barrel drum. It wuz highuhn it wuz cross. Den deah wuz a lill drum frum twelve tuh fifteen inches wide an bout eighteen inches high. Duh udduh drum wuz duh medium size, kine uh in between duh udduh two. Duh big drum wuz duh one dey beat at duh wake. Dey use drums at dances an meetins, too.

"Wen we hab a fewnul, we all mahch roun duh grabe in a ring. We shout an pray."

We wanted to know if river baptisms were always held

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795 during an ebb tide and Lawrence hastened to assure us,
783 "Yes'm, dey alluz hole duh baptism on a high ebb tide. Das so duh tide will carry duh sin out." [83]

551 Had the old man ever known any people who had been named for the days of the week?

"I knowd one man name Fridy, one dat wuz name Satdy an anudduh he name wuz Toosdy. Guess dey name um dataway cuz dey wuz bawn on doze days." [30]

262 Baker told us that many people in the section refused to
777 eat certain foods, believing bad luck would follow if they ate them.

"Deah's lots dataway now," he commented. "Lots uh folks dohn eat some food cuz ef dey did dey say it would bring bad luck on duh parents. Some dohn eat rice, some dohn eat egg, an some dohn eat chicken." [85]

829 "Muh gran, she Rachel Grant, she use tuh tell me bout lot
782 uh deze tings. I membuh she use tuh pray ebry day at sunrise, at middle day and den at sunset. She alluz face duh sun an wen she finish prayin she alluz bow tuh duh sun. She
567 tell me bout duh slabes wut could fly too. Ef dey didn lak
829 it on duh plantation, dey jis take wing an fly right back tuh
789 Africa.

"Muh gran say dey use tuh eat wid oystuh shells. Use
412 um fuh spoons. Wen dey go tuh shoot duh gun, dey ketch
237 duh fyuh wid a rag an flint."
411 We asked him if he had ever heard of a hoe that worked
789 by itself and he told us that he had often heard this story regarding the hoe [39] and that he had also heard many tales about a magic rail splitting wood without anyone touching it.

825 Suddenly the quiet of the afternoon was shattered by a high reed-like whistling sound. It continued for quite a time, then stopped as abruptly as it had started. Was it a person or an animal? It was impossible for us to tell.

"Das a spiduh, missus," Baker explained. "It come roun

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115 (351) the house. Across the road to the left was a field which had been planted in corn.

Charles, a medium-sized, intelligent man, very black of skin and rather small-featured, talked to us about his people.

(165) "Dey is long libin people," he began. "Muh fathuh lib until he a hundud an muh mothuh wuz ninety wen she die. Muh gran, she name Louise an come frum Bahama Ilun.* She lib tuh hundud an fifteen. Das duh way dey do an I guess I'll do duh same."

178 Did the people around Harrington believe in the old customs the way his mother and grandmother had believed in them?

"Yes'm, dey sticks tuh em but duh times is changin an yuh (764) hab tuh change wid em. Duh unduhtakuh come now an mone lakly he bring yuh back tuh duh chuch an dey ain no watch an singin."

• 795 In the course of our talk he told us that the river baptisms were held by members of the local churches. "Yes'm, we still baptize in duh ribbuh," Charles said. "We hab one not (783) long ago. We hab tuh wait till a Sunday wen a ebb tide come at a good time, cuz it duh ebb tide wut carry yuh sin away."[63]

754 Charles confirmed what the other residents had told us regarding conjure.

"Well, dey's some belieb in cunjuh an some wut dohn. (753) Dey's lots wut say sickness ain natchul an somebody put sumpm down fuh yuh.[15] I ain belieb in it much muhself but 829 dey's curious tings happen. Now, wen I wuz a boy deah's a root makuh wut lib yuh name Alexanduh. He wuz African an he say he kin do any kine uh cunjuh wut kin be done an he kin cuo any kine uh disease.[48] He wuz a small man, 789 slim an bery black. Alexanduh say he could fly.[68b, 69c] He (587)

*A number of slaves accompanied their masters from the West Indies to this country. It was also the custom for slave ships to stop at the Bahamas en route to America with a cargo.

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Asked if he remembered any other Africans who tied their heads up, the old man told us, "I membuh a ole uhmun name Daphne. He didn tie he head up lak ole man Israel. He weah loose wite veil on he head. He wuz shahp-feechuh too an light uh complexion. He weah one ring in he eah fuh he eyes.[27] I hab refrence to it bein some kine uh pruhtection tuh he eyes. Wen he pray, he bow two aw tree times in duh middle uh duh prayuh."

We asked about the music they used to have and what they used for dancing in the old days.

"We ain dance den duh way dey dances now. We dance roun in a succle an den we dances fuh prayin.[19a] I membuhs we use tuh hab drums fuh music an we beat duh drum fuh dances.[33]

"Now, ole man Dembo he use tuh beat duh drum tuh duh fewnul,[34] but Mr. Couper he stop dat. He say he dohn wahn drums beatin roun duh dead. But I watch em hab a fewnul. I gits behine duh bush an hide an watch an see wut dey does. Dey go in a long pruhcession tuh duh buryin groun an dey beat duh drums long duh way an dey submit duh body tuh duh groun. Den dey dance roun in a ring an dey motion wid duh hans.[18] Dey sing duh body tuh duh grabe an den dey let it down an den dey succle roun in duh dance.

"Dey ain hab no chuch in doze days an wen dey wannuh pray, dey git behine duh house aw hide someweah an make a great prayuh. Dey ain suppose tuh call on duh Lawd; dey hadduh call on duh massuh an ef dey ain do dat, dey git nine an tutty.

"Dey ain marry den duh way dey do now. Attuh slabery dey hadduh remarry. Dey hab big baptizin in duh ribbuh lak dey do tuhday an dey dip em on duh ebb tuh wash duh sins away an duh preachuh he make a great prayuh tuh duh ribbuh.[85]

"Ole man Okra he a great un fuh buil drum.[35] He take a calf skin an tan it an make duh side uh maple. Ise pretty

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ple an dey all say dey plant duh crop an dey doin hadduh wuk it. I heah lot ub em tell how dey git obuh yuh. Dey trap em on a boat wid a red flag."

Old Tom Floyd was not the only root doctor Floyd could remember. There were many others, he said, some still living and plying their trade.[48]

"I knows a root makuh now," he told us. "Uncle Quawt, he root makuh. Does yuh know him?"

We replied that we had known Quarterman for some time but that he had never told us he could work roots.

"Maybe he ain tell yuh but he kin wuk em all right.[48] He kin put a cunjuh on wid a goofa bag as good as anybody. Now, I tell yuh bout im. Deah's two felluhs in Brunswick wut does a lill killin an wen duh case is call, two buzzud light on duh cote house an wen duh men come up befo duh jedge, he let um go free. Now, Uncle Quawt, he had sumpm tuh do wid dat. Dey ain so many root makuhs lef."

Floyd, too, had heard of Alexander, the old African root maker.

"Yes'm, Ise heahd much bout im. He wuz still libin wen I wuz a boy. Ise heahd em tell plenty uh tales bout im. Dey say duh boat leab fuh Savannah an Alexanduh he yuh. He say good-bye frum yuh an tell em tuh go on widout im but he say he see em deah an wen duh boat git tuh Savannah, Alexanduh he in Savannah on duh dock tuh ketch duh line."

Pleasant memories associated with the social activities of the past caused Floyd to ponder abstractedly for a time. Finally he roused himself and told us, "We use tuh dance roun tuh a drum an a rattle goad. Dey could make good drum frum hawg an bass drum frum cow.[25] Doze days dey ain only beat duh drum fuh dancin; dey beat it on duh way tuh duh grabe yahd.[24] Dat wuz fuh duh det mahch wen dey use tuh carry duh body in a wagon. Dey hab lot uh singin den too an dey hab singin at duh baptizin. Den dey baptize em in duh ribbuh jis lak dey does now. Dey sing wid all duh

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candidates walkin in wite robes tuh duh ribbuh an duh preachuh he dip em on duh ebb tide an he pray duh ribbuh tuh take duh sin away.[68] Dey ain mine gittin wet in duh ribbuh.

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"Heahd bout duh Ibo's Landing? Das duh place weah dey bring duh Ibos obuh in a slabe ship an wen dey git yuh, dey ain lak it an so dey all staht singin an dey mahch right down in duh ribbuh tuh mahch back tuh Africa, but dey ain able tuh git deah. Dey gits drown."

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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Children are expected from Sea Island marriages, whether they are the couple's own or just living with them. Children are highly prized regardless of the financial condition of the parents, and abortion is rare and generally viewed as an abomination against God and nature. If a young couple joins a parent's household, rather than establishing a new one, the elder members of the family usually take responsibility for the care and discipline of the children. Many elderly residents, the guardians of several generations of children, attribute their longevity and good health to the belief that they *cannot* die until all the children for whom they are responsible are grown and able to care for themselves, or until their responsibilities are delegated to someone else. Some children are reared by sisters, aunts, uncles, or even distant cousins. It is not unusual for a child to reach adulthood living not more than a block from the natural parent but residing with another relative, who is perhaps childless or more financially secure. Even children born out of wedlock generally know who their fathers and grandparents are. These children are given the same respect in the community as legitimate children and are as likely to be reared by the paternal side of the family as by the maternal side.[45]

The church is probably the most important social organization in the Sea Island communities. Outwardly, the Sunday services follow the patterns prescribed for Baptist and Methodist churches and are thus based on Christian doctrine. Some of the beliefs of black Christians in the Sea Islands are quite distinctive. For example, I have heard many elderly residents speak of a tripartite division of the human being into body, soul, and spirit, whereas Christian doctrine teaches that a person has only a body and a soul which is synonymous with the spirit. According to many elderly island residents, when one dies, only the soul returns to the kingdom of God. The body and spirit remain on earth. And although the soul of the dead person cannot harm the living, the spirit can, at will, cause another to harm him- or herself.[46]

This concept of a tripartite body, soul, and spirit, with the body and spirit remaining on earth after death and able to influence the living, is widespread in West Africa today. Many African peoples do not conceive of any geographical separation between the real world and the spirit world; as soon as the body dies physically, they believe the person arrives in the spirit world.[47] To these physical and spiritual entities, some societies add a belief in a "shadow" entity.[48] The Sea

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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be for that of an elderly person who had acquired many friends and relatives over the years.

The Sea Island churches are the mainstay of the community and are always full of life, vigor, and energy. Many of them have long and illustrious histories. The Hebrew United Presbyterian Church on Johns Island, for example, was organized in 1868 after the white Presbyterian church no longer admitted blacks to worship at its services or in its building. The blacks held services in a bush tent until a new building could be put together out of lumber left on Seabrook and Kiawah beaches by a shipwreck. At the time the island could be reached only by boat, and according to the church historian, the organizing members gathered the wood, put it on a raft, and floated it to the construction site.

Brick Church, located on St. Helena Island, is a Baptist church with an even longer history. It was constructed by slaves for their masters in 1855. In 1862 the slaves, who had been permitted to worship in the balcony, took over the church when the white masters fled the island during the Civil War. Before Penn School (the first normal industrial and agricultural school for the education of blacks in South Carolina) was erected in 1864, the school's founder, Laura Towne, held classes in this church. An elegant two-story structure, Brick Church has been standing firm and serene for more than a century on the grounds of what is now Penn School Center.[53]

The Sea Island church services are lively and enthusiastic. At a good Baptist or African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Sunday morning service, the singing and praising will be audible for many miles. If there is a pianist, drummer, guitarist, or tambourinist, the service is even more energetic. The musical instruments are secondary, however, to the congregation's expressions of joy through handclapping, handshaking, and general rocking and swaying. It is literally impossible to attend these services and not be moved to participate actively. Even the smallest child attempts to move in time to the beat of the songs. The rhythm is also a very important part of the sermons. The minister uses many rhetorical devices to involve his congregation in the service, chief of which is the repetition of words and phrases at the beginning and end of each statement (see Chapter 3). The parishioners are mesmerized by the flow, rhythm, and steady recurrence of the repetitions, and their responses keep the service alive and active.

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17 organized and preceded by missionaries who set up preaching places in
799 the Beaufort district and in the Savannah River area. The novelty of Baptist views on baptism and church membership were so different from other traditions that they attracted much attention and at first ensured ostracism in the Sea Island region. The Baptist mission at Beaufort was organized into a church in 1800. But upwardly mobile Baptists did not immediately gain respectability from the Episcopalian community. The Reverend Henry Holcomb lived in Beaufort and served the Baptist Church there for a number of years before and after the War for Independence. In a letter he discussed early attitudes toward the Baptists:

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> The principal inhabitants of Beaufort though possessed of learning, wealth and talents, were with a few honorable exceptions, strangers to true religion, and strongly prejudiced against the Baptists. The doctrine of regeneration they treated with contempt; and baptism, if we understand the meaning of the word, had never been administered in their vicinity. If ever I felt the ensnaring fear of men, it was then, but . . . God and truth were on my side. . . . Several "fellows of the better sort" made attempts to turn ministerial exercises into ridicule . . . stealing my Bible . . . while I was administering the Lord's Supper.[10]

Yet Sea Island Baptists overcame initial prejudice, and Episcopalians (postwar Anglicans) grew accustomed to witnessing baptizings in the Beaufort River. Contrary to Episcopalian apprehensions, baptismal rites were administered with the greatest solemnity, and even Baptist church services contained none of the evangelical enthusiasm that characterized Methodists at that time. Leading citizens eventually converted to the Baptist faith. Episcopalian acceptance was probably influenced by Baptist economic success. Before the War for Independence, Baptists were already on the list of Sea Island "aristocracy", rivaling Episcopalians in wealth consisting of land and slaves. This occasioned intermarriage between the once rivaling denominations. One of the most illustrious Baptist ministers of South Carolina, Richard Fuller of Beaufort, came from
17 an Episcopalian lineage which included colonial Indian fighters, legisla-
799 tors, and signers of the Declaration of Independence. The Fuller family owned several Sea Islands and hundreds of slaves. The Lawton-Robert family, Baptist converts from the Huguenot sect, migrated to South Carolina from France. They organized the little Black Swamp Church upon acquiring properties at Robertville (between Beaufort and Savannah). Robertville became one of the wealthiest areas in South Carolina and the Lawton-Roberts were among the most prominent families in the Low-

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been preached for many years to our Negroes." The boast needs qualification and amplification. Certainly as far back as Whitefield and the Bryans periodic spurts of whites *preaching* to blacks occurred. Also the more recent and protracted Methodist presence in the Lowcountry is another illustration. Moreover, some slaves could occasionally take advantage of the few existing white-controlled black churches in the Savannah and Augusta, Georgia area. Most Baptist churches in the region were members of the Savannah River Baptist Association organized in 1803 by Georgia and South Carolina. In 1818 the Association divided, including only churches north of the Savannah River and within South Carolina. Jurisdiction was in the districts of Beaufort, Barnwell, and Colleton, but most member churches were concentrated in Beaufort District. By 1830 the Savannah River Association consisted of thirty-two churches. Back rows and galleries seated free blacks, as well as domestic and artisan slaves. Thus despite assurances of William Fripp, prior to 1830 the masses of slaves were not included in Baptist apostolic activity and only nominally represented in a few white congregations.[1]

In 1831 and 1832, a short-lived but prolific Lowcountry revival occurred and reportedly stirred a number of planters in the Sea Island region to accept a religious affiliation. The effects of this "remarkable" religious awakening were most visible in Baptist congregations, and records of the Savannah River Baptist Association indicate a comparatively large membership increase in these churches. By 1831 the largest Beaufort District churches were Euhaw, Pipe Creek, Black Swamp, Beaufort, St. Helena, and May River. In 1830, just prior to the revival, the combined number of baptismal candidates for these churches was 164. Toward the end of 1831, a total of 228 baptisms were reported. In 1832 Black Swamp and Pipe Creek made no reports, but the other four larger churches reported a total of 619 baptisms.[2] Considering the paucity of whites in these areas the numbers represent significant increases. Early records had no racial breakdown, but evidence indicates that some of the converts before 1831 were black.

Both Episcopalian and Baptist planters "smitten" during the famous 1831 revival reportedly took new interest in Christianizing their slaves. The former denomination allowed Methodist missionaries to preach and teach among bondspeople. No missionary movement for slaves was organized by the Baptists, however. And rather than allow Methodists on their plantations, most Baptist planters who favored the enterprise preferred to accept "converted" slaves into their own churches.[3]

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17 in the Sea Island District inspired more attention toward the spiritual welfare of the Gullahs.

175 799 Daniel Baker's conversion of Richard Fuller in 1831 had significant implications for Christianizing efforts in the Sea Islands. Under Fuller's ministration the Beaufort Church became the largest, most influential congregation in the Sea Island region. Fuller was greatly moved by the reformer's cry to instruct the slaves and was largely responsible for the comparatively phenomenal growth of the Beaufort Baptist Church.[23]

Richard Fuller was a member of the Fuller-Middleton family, long-time residents of Beaufort District. Fuller's personal holdings consisted of plantations on St. Helena and Cat Islands as well as the mainland. At the time of Baker's appearance in Beaufort, Fuller was a wealthy, well-established, Harvard-educated attorney not yet thirty years old. His parents were Baptists, but at birth Fuller was baptized an Episcopalian. Following his "moving" conversion in 1831, Fuller was rebaptized and he united with the local Episcopal church. But, not finding the "peace of mind" nor the "inspiration" he sought, Fuller was baptized again, this time in the Beaufort River, and as a Baptist. As further evidence of his reformation, Fuller immediately relinquished his lucrative law practice and declared himself called to the gospel ministry. In 1832 he was ordained a Baptist minister and accepted pastorship of Beaufort Church, where he remained until 1847. He then accepted a call to the Seventh Street Baptist Church in Baltimore where he was pastor until 1871.[24]

175 567 799 Late in his career, Fuller confided to a friend that when he was initially "called" to the ministry he resolved to confine his labors wholly to the slave population. But, Fuller claimed, he "was prevented by the hand of God." Although he did not devote his entire career to religious instruction of bondspeople, as a minister in Beaufort Fuller spent much of his time to preaching among the Gullahs. The attention and interest he gave represented a turning point in the religious history of Sea Island blacks. The immense African-American population, previously ignored by Baptist planters and churches, gradually, under the administration of Fuller, became objects of concern from a spiritual standpoint. As white membership increased, slaves of these new members were baptized and the Beaufort Church became a training ground for black Baptist converts at liberty to attend services. Fuller insisted that galleries be given over to the bulging black membership. A special lecture room was also added where black church members could be instructed before and after Sun-

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After Fuller left for Baltimore in 1847, attempts to bring slaves into Sea Island churches were not persued with the same enthusiasm. But in 1853, through efforts of the Savannah River Baptist Association missionary and an energetic new pastor at Beaufort Church named I.M.C. Beaker, Gullahs again became a focal point of concern. During the last seven antebellum years, slave baptisms in the Beaufort River again became frequent. A record was set in 1857 when 220 slaves received into the Church "were all on Sunday morning . . . Baptized by our Pastor . . . in 1 hour and 45 minutes and in the presence of a very large number of spectators." The total number of slaves baptized for that year was also a record—556.[27]

The first phase of Baptist efforts to Christianize slaves, from 1830 to 1845, roughly corresponds to a period of growth in Sea Island churches and, most spectacularly, the Beaufort Church. In 1833, Beaufort District had a slave population of around 30,861. For that year the nine largest Beaufort District Baptist congregations reported a total membership of around 4,419. That was over two and one-half times the total membership of the remaining twenty-eight Baptist churches in the Savannah River Association (whose combined memberships was only 1,666). We cannot be certain about the number of slaves these figures represent, since racial designations were not yet in use. But the majority of these church members were slaves, a hypothesis supported by membership returns of later years for which there are racial designations.[28]

By 1845, when the Southern Baptist Convention was organized, the largest Beaufort District Baptist churches at Beaufort, St. Helena, May River and Hilton Head for instance, reported a total membership of around 5,914. Most of this increase is attributable to slave baptisms and over half of those to Beaufort Church. Total membership for all forty-three churches within the Association was about 8,529. This trend indicates that the most active area of religious instruction was in the Sea Islands. St. Helena Parish, with a slave population of 6,740 in 1845, had two Baptist churches. While St. Helena's Brick Baptist Church was accessible to the several thousand slaves living there, Beaufort Church drew its membership for a forty-mile radius that included six Sea Islands and parts of the mainland. The adult slave population in Beaufort District was around 22,000 in 1840, out of a total slave population of 29,682.[29] Thus approximately one in every five slaves in Beaufort District was a Baptist church member.

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he left), and late-coming Baptist missionaries who brought the last surge of slave baptismal activity in the mid-1850s. Apparently little screening occurred prior to uniting with Baptist churches, except examinations imposed upon the slaves by black leadership. Slaves were accepted into the Church from the societies, and admission was based on a profession of faith, evidence of "good character" from the slavemaster, and recommendation from the white brother in charge, who relied on intelligence received from the black elder.[46]

This lack of a meaningful conviction to teach Christianity raises the question of why some slaveholding Baptists accepted such large numbers of slaves into the churches at all. Neither a revival spirit nor Northern agitation fully explain the motivation. But activities of the Church Committee on Discipline perhaps express the manner in which Baptists expected Christianity to best serve them as slaveholders. Their change in attitude reflected the general shift away from paranoia about Christianizing slaves. After 1845 many believed that practical Christianity could work for the slave system. And although the majority of Gullahs had little or no contact with the Baptist church itself, church members felt the restraining arm of the faith through the Committee on Discipline.

Church discipline is an old concept, dating as far back as the sixteenth century. Early Baptist discipline was similar to the English Separatists' 1696 "Confessions of Faith," and integral to views of Christian fellowship for believers. This spiritual and communal sense revolved around creating a "true and orderly gospel church," with members conducting personal behavior according to Old Testament biblical tenants. Later, London Baptists' "Confessions of Faith" reflected concern for "order and discipline," and this was emphasized by their American counterpart, the Philadelphia Baptist Association, when in 1742 they composed their confessions and annexed a particular discipline code to it. In 1769 the Charleston Baptist Association adopted the Philadelphia model. Not all, probably not most, American Baptist churches had explicit discipline references in their confessions although discipline was a reality in the churches. But Charleston Baptists and their Lowcountry congregational extensions were products of the Calvinist-Baptist tradition as is reflected in their patent emphasis on discipline, and in other ways previously discussed.[47]

Nineteenth-century Southern and frontier evangelical congregations fostered a sense of community through worship, revivals, camp meet-

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ings, prayer meetings, and discipline. Church discipline kept alive the "heavenly pattern" which each church personified. This "city set on a hill" meted out censure and excommunication regularly to offending members who paled its self-image of purity and piety. As the country expanded, church discipline was used to control the raw excesses of new communities struggling against such "immoralities" as "drinking, fornication, gambling, dueling and profanity." Evangelical churches grew increasingly more powerful and espoused an increasingly conservative theology in the South and perhaps elsewhere. This trend toward religious conservatism was tied, though not exclusively, to political and social developments in the South, most notably to slavery. An obvious manifestation of this was the national polarization of church denominations.[48] In the Lowcountry, another significant and more immediate expression of efforts to protect the existing social and political order through religion is found in the function of discipline committees on plantations. Every Lowcountry church examined for this study with a large black membership had such a committee. The nature of this committee's concern with the slaves' activities reveals how Baptists intended to make Gullahs "good Christians" mainly insofar as Christianity made them better slaves. The work of the Committee on Discipline in the largest Sea Island church amplifies this thesis.

Once attention focused on slave conversion, the most pressing church business was discipline of slave members. The Committee existed previously, but was reorganized and restructured in 1840, and its function broadened. According to the Minutes, the disciplinary body governed behavior of all church members, "both bond and free," but was specifically charged with looking into breaches of conduct committed by bondspeople. This committee of eight brethren investigated a few white cases, mostly involving social lapses. But in the "inquiry and investigation" of slaves, the "Committee on Discipline" had "broad" but "conservative powers."[49]

As with white "brethren in charge" of black societies, prominent Sea Island slaveholders, such as Benjamin Chaplin, Saxby Chaplin, William Fuller, James Fripp, and Edward Fripp dominated discipline of the Gullahs. Furthermore, members of the Discipline Committee might also double as superintendents of a black society. Sea Island planter Benjamin Chaplin, for example, was a member of the disciplinary body and also superintendent of the Beaufort Society. Noted for cruelty to his

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slaves and intemperance, even Chaplin's peers admitted that his "violent temper" which was "so entirely ungovernable," disqualified him as a religious teacher.[50]

Discipline Committees met once a month. Prior to 1845 black elders met at the church with the Committee and reported on the state of religion in their societies. Later, this procedure was discontinued. Instead, white brethern in charge of a given society met with black members one Sunday in the month and subsequently reported to the Discipline Committee, providing a list of recommendations for action. The responsibilities of the brother in charge were elaborated in the Minutes of Beaufort Church. Should any "private or personal offense be reported," he could take such action as "he may think proper." If the offense was of a "more serious character, involving immorality," it was the duty of the brother in charge to carefully investigate "the facts," report these to the church at its regular discipline meeting, and offer his recommendations. The white brother was also "authorized and expected to examine applicants for restoration" of their membership, "and if satisfied," to recommend action to the church.[51]

Thus only the "more serious" offenses got to the church discipline level, and all manner of "lapses in moral conduct" and plantation "crimes" were considered serious enough to warrant censure by the church. Slaves were suspended and excommunicated as often for "crimes" against plantation authority as for "moral" breaches. Frequently mentioned were offences such as "killing beef," "hog stealing," "barn burning" and simply "theft." Additionally, flight appeared consistently as a reason for excommunication. In 1841 for instance, bondswoman Betty was "suspended for running away," and the same action was taken against Tom for "harboring above Betty." Other reasons for excommunication were "impudence," "Sabbath breaking," "fornication" and "adultery." Occasionally slaves requested "permission to marry."[52]

The word of plantation authority subjected a slave to church discipline. As in a white court of law, a bondsperson's word was worth nothing in a white church. Monthly society discipline meetings were public. They were meant to dishonor and humiliate the slaves before each other, to admonish others against "wrong doing," and to prostrate the "guilty" before "church" law. The Gullahs were confronted with their "sins" by their earthy masters as they would face a "heavenly father" in the future. Interests of both "masters" were represented as the same so a crime against

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a slaveholder was a "sin" in the eyes of God. This outlook was pressed on children who, after 1845, sometimes received instruction on Sunday mornings in the form of oral catechism, recitation of the Ten Commandments, and prayers. Rebecca Grant recalled that in Beaufort her former owners "wouldn't miss de catechism," and they [the children], "was taught they must be faithful to the Missus and Marsa's work like you would to your heavenly Father's work." Slaves on St. Helena Island discussed "Good Billy" (William) Fripp, a Baptist master who was referred to as "good," not because of his benevolence toward his slaves, but for his avowed piety and strict sense of biblical discipline. According to the Gullahs this "leading Baptist" carried his Bible out to the fields, showed slaves "Moses' law," and then flogged them "accordin'."[53]

Baptist slaveholders applied selected scriptures to the Gullahs' daily life struggle. Planters hoped a general spirit of contrition, via a "fear of God," would prevail in the slave quarters and subvert independent thought and action. They viewed discipline meetings as having a purgative effect on the Gullahs and defeating their efforts to resist the most degrading aspects of bondage. Double jeopardy existed for these black church members. If discovered committing acts against slaveholding interests, they suffered bodily punishment. But worse perhaps was expulsion from black society, the Gullahs' primary source for freedom of expression. An excommunicated or suspended church member would receive no pass to attend a preaching place or "society" or be allowed to "hold prays." Slaveholders tried using Christianity to exercise psychological dominance over the minds of Gullahs as they employed brute force to maintain physical control. No other spiritual activity detracted from or competed with these religious tribunals. When they occurred, plantation authority insisted on the slaves' undivided attention. From the Beaufort Church Minutes we find that even the Methodist missionary's limited activities had to revolve around these assemblages:

> The Pastor to write to the Rev. Mr. Moore [Methodist Missionary] and request him to appoint any other Sabbath than the first in the month to preach on Ladies Island—as that is the day appointed for the discipline of that Society attached to this Church.[54]

White Baptists' use of church discipline to undermine the Gullahs' active indignation and struggle against bondage is evident when considering the nature of the "sins" of which black church members were found

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175 795 794 685 "guilty." Theft, for instance, brought many Gullahs before disciplinary tribunals. Of course slaves did steal for consumptive purposes, obviously because provisions were often insufficient and monotonous. To keep cotton at maximum yield, planters sacrificed cultivation of food staples for their workers. Provision acreage was not determined by the slave community's size, but by the numbers of food-acres workers could attend while working cotton. Sam Mitchell, a former bondsman on one of John Chaplin's Ladies Island plantations, considered his master one of the more tolerable slaveholders. Yet Mitchell recalled that slaves received only a weekly peck of corn except at potato-digging time when they also received potatoes. Sam Polite, of John Fripp's plantation on St. Helena Island, also remembered a grim picture of subsistence:

> On Sattiday night every slabe dat wuks gits peck of corn and pea, and sometimes meat and clabber. You nebber see any sugar, neider coffee in slabery. You has straw in your mattress but dey gib you blanket. Ebery year in Christmas month you gits fur or eider fibe yaa'd cloth. . . . You wears hit winter en summer, Sunday en ebery day. You don't git no coat.[11]

175 685 673 181 Understandably, Gullahs felt no particular bond toward a "Thou shalt not steal" edict despite supposed spiritual and assured physical reprisals. Certainly the Gullahs realized the sham of such dictates given their peculiar circumstances and oppression. Still Gullahs were not immoral on the subject of theft. Among themselves they took a serious attitude toward theft, considering it a breach of trust. Yet Gullahs felt no compunction about such acts directed toward the slave system. In the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission Interviews, conducted in 1863, Robert Smalls and Harry McMillan, two soldiers, Sea Island residents and former bondsmen, explained the slaves' attitude toward theft. They testified that while the majority of Gullahs stole from their masters and deceived them, these slaves would not steal from each other and were truthful in their dealings with one another. During the Civil War a white officer of the First South Carolina Volunteers told Charlotte Forten, a black Northerner, that he never saw a regiment where men were so honest. "In many camps the colonel and the rest of us would find it necessary to place a guard before our tents. We never do it here," he said. "They are left entirely unguarded. Yet nothing has ever been touched." Similarly, Laura M. Towne wrote in her diary: "The men and women come crowding here at all times begging to be allowed to buy clothing,

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partition behind him, & fastened on the other side—in this position the poor wretch was left for the night. . . . The wretch [Sandiford] returned to his victim about daylight next morning & found him, as anyone would expect, dead, *choked, strangled,* frozen to death, *murdered.*[61]

That same day the jurors reached a verdict—the slave met his death by choking on the chain his master put around his neck, "having slipped from the position in which he was placed." The verdict, Chaplin wrote should have been Roger died from "inhumane treatment," for he not only strangled from trying to disengage himself, hence becoming entangled in the most "shocking position," but was also "stiff dead" from the cold. In Chaplin's "individual" opinion the act was deliberate, but unpremeditated murder. Whether Chaplin attempted to convince the court of this is unknown. The case, like many such situations was certainly murder, but it behooved slaveholders to protect their position. The "witness" against Sandiford was a slave, the planter was related to at least four of the eight jurors and property rights were supreme in the South. Whatever Chaplin felt in private, his public posture was another matter. Furthermore, five years later, he defended an overseer who killed a runaway slave for stealing watermelons.[62]

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Since Sandiford was a Baptist planter, his conduct came before the Beaufort Church where he held membership. The crime apparently occurred on February 18, 1841, and the inquest was held the next day. However, not until March 31 was the incident was brought to the Beaufort Church's attention according to the Minutes. At that time it was discussed at the "Business Meeting," and Sandiford ordered to appear at its next session. On May 5, after receiving "a letter" from Sandiford, his case was "postponed for further consideration." On June 30, "the case of Brother Sandiford was again postponed," and never mentioned after that time. Sandiford's letter was not part of the Minutes and its contents are unknown. Undoubtedly he defended his actions, and though the case probably made him an unpopular communicant, he was never "disciplined." He eventually sold his property and left the region. But more significant, this rawly violent, not to say un-Christian act went uncensored by the Baptist Church.[63] One can imagine what a stir it caused among the slaves, some of whom probably had sanguine expectations that at least ecclesiastical action would be taken. Such occasions reinforced for slaves the fact that even in matters of "Christian" justice, a double standard applied.

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land, but many were taken forcibly. Gullahs risked and often lost their lives to flee, telling horror tales of death and suffering inflicted upon anyone suspected of desiring either to remain on the Sea Islands or to escape from the mainland where the planters "refugeed." The fact that they continued to flee under these circumstances is the best testimony to their sense of independence and will to freedom. One such incident was told to Laura M. Towne:

> A woman today just escaped from her owners on the Maipland. She said she had hard work to escape, sleeping in the marsh and hiding all day. She brought away her two little children. Her master had just whipped her oldest son almost to death because he was suspected of trying to join the Yankees.[45]

Although the Battle of Port Royal ended in an easy Northern victory and occupation, the rest of South Carolina remained in Confederate hands. Planters fled the Sea Island region but returned, sometimes under cover of darkness, hoping to force slaves back to the mainland. Blacks and whites picketing the region could not place men at every landing spot and Gullahs lived in apprehension of the slaveholders' return. Susannah's master returned several times, once telling slaves to burn the cotton. "Why for we burn de cotton? Where we get money then for buy clo' sho' and salt?" So instead of burning cotton, they guarded it nightly. Women kept watch and men stood ready to defend their interests when the alarm sounded. At the Oaklands plantation of rebel Baptist Dr. Sams, a field hand named Cupid told Charlotte Forten how his master had daringly returned to St. Helena, risking capture by Northern soldiers, solely to retrieve slaves. Sams attempted to cajole Cupid into cooperation:

> He ordered the people to get all the furniture together and take it to a plantation on the opposite side of the creek, and to stay on that side themselves. "So," said Cupid, "dey could jus' sweep us all in a heap, an' put us in de boat. An' he telled me to take Patience—dat's my wife—an' de chil'en down to a certain pint, an' den I could come back, if I choose. Jus' as if I was gwine to be sich a goat!" added he, with a look and gesture of ineffable contempt. He and the rest of the people, instead of obeying their master, left the place and hid themselves in the woods; and when he [Sams] came to look for them, not one of his "faithful servants" was to be found.[46]

To the end Baptists had "faith" in the "faithfulness" of their slaves, apparently believing that the white church had secured fidelity among the Gullahs. Just how far some whites took this assumption is illustrated

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by a statement issued by Prince William Baptist Church as late as May 20, 1865:

Found the following coloured members have deserted their homes, the homes of their owners and their church and we fear the Cause of God. They were excommunicated. Boston, Amy, Sallie, Jane, Hannah, Jerry, Ellen, Ransom, Rina, Abraham, Annie, etc. . . .[67]

In attempting to regiment male-female relations in the slave quarters Baptist slaveholders demonstrated the most hypocrisy and cynicism. Masters separated families by whim and will regardless of religious convictions. Baptist planters sold "Christian" slaves without trying to rationalize such sales in correspondence with the laws of God even when these sales fragmented families. "I give to my son Alec, a son of my wench, boy named Jimmy," wrote Joseph Lawton, the "illustrious" pastor of Black Swamp Church at Robertville where elaborate galleries for slaves and free blacks were constructed in 1824. Slaves lived in constant dread of separation. "Every slave know what, 'I'll put you in my pocket sir,' mean" said former Robertville slave Isaiah Butler. A Northern Baptist published an appeal to slaveholding Baptists which contained an 1835 advertisement taken from a Southern newspaper. It was a notice of an auction telling "its own sad tale," and was a comment on Southern clergymen's rationalization about slavery. The "property" of the estate of "the late Rev. Dr. Furman," prominent Charleston Baptist and supporter of religious instruction for slaves, was for sale. Aside from three lots of land and a library, there were: "27 Negroes, some of them prime, two mules, one horse and an old wagon."[68]

Yet despite frequent forced family breakups, the church was particularly pharisaical in pretending that slaves were free agents. Gullahs considered "guilty" of "adultery," for example, were excommunicated as a general rule, for according to biblical law it was a sin to "put away" one's wife or husband. This ludicrous issue was debated, however, and the charge rescinded if an individual went before the church via the black watchman or white brother in charge and asked permission to "remarry."[69] Few Gullahs took this step, seeming to prefer exercising their independence insofar as they could within a forced situation. The folly of this supposed violation of scripture was not lost to their intelligence, and they usually ignored such censures.

Slaves' wishes in choosing a mate were sometimes ignored, and unions

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175 581 586 appointment," wrote Botume. "Sometimes two men claimed the same woman, whilst she coquetted not a little, evidently disposed to take the one that bid the highest." But, Botume added that this "rarely if ever" occurred when children were involved.[74]

175 795 797 Although the Committee on Discipline within Baptist churches operated as a religious tribunal, efforts to use Christianity to control the Gullahs was largely unsuccessful. Nevertheless, Gullahs seemed almost unanimously to prefer religious affiliation through Baptist membership rather than Methodist. Methodist missionaries displayed a more sincere and human interest in the slaves than their sometimes ruthless, Puritan-oriented Baptist masters. "This seems to be a very unpromising portion of our field of labor," wrote one Methodist missionary, "all owing to the prejudices of the negroes." He continued:

> We cannot . . . find fault with the negroes in this portion of our mission field, for preferring another communion to our own; but our voice will ever be lifted against them, for refusing the bread of life, because, forsooth it comes not to them on a silver salver, or from the hands of one who has not "gone down into or come up out of the water."[75]

The cermonious manner in which Baptists initiated converts into church fellowship impressed the Gullahs. Also, despite Calvinist orientation, Baptists were nonheirarchial, worship was less formal, and church structure less legalistic. But, such considerations were not as significant in influencing Gullah acceptance of the Baptist denomination as were other factors. Baptists slaves exercised a religious autonomy the Methodists would not hear of, and this, coupled with the fact that Sea Island slavery was a quasi-absentee type, contributed to the Gullahs' opportunity to control their own religion, to a point. Moreover, in their endeavor to keep blacks under civil control and to keep them on the plantations, slaveholders allowed spiritual permissiveness by legitimizing already existing black societies and leaving them in the hands of black leaders with only minimal white supervision.[76]

175 793 [554] [797] The extent to which spiritual autonomy influenced Gullah culture and social organization is most evident in the prominence of black leadership. Baptist planters recommended black watchmen who were supposedly "tried and true," and slaveholders apparently had great confidence in those chosen. Such elders were usually staunch church members, but also influential and respected in the quarters. Methodist missionaries were skep-

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tional structure. Baptists on the other hand had separate congregations, loosely bound together. Baptists sanctioned black associations that were relatively independent of the church and largely dominated by the slaves themselves. In some cases Baptists even provided Gullahs with a place to hold society and "prays" meetings among themselves, however humble such places were. Moreover, Baptist planters authorized religious leaders from the quarters with whom the Gullahs readily identified. Not surprisingly then, to the extent that Gullahs adopted Christianity, they considered themselves Baptists. The Baptist faith became the Gullahs' own personal religion, one they molded and fashioned away the watchful, critical eyes of the forces of spiritual "superiority" and physical exploitation.

Why did the Baptist slaveholders permit this flexibility and modicum of freedom to their slaves? The answer probably lies with the slaveholders' capacity for self-deception and belief in the power of their ability to dominate (for which as a class they are well known). Thus they were confident that black leaders' presentation of Christianity would not jeopardize plantation interests. In keeping with the merging Southern religious vogue of the time, slaveholders ultimately believed in the soothing effects of Christianity on a slave population's mentality. Furthermore, a limited degree of personal commitment had an effect on some slaveholders' attitude toward Christian instruction. For if "duty" and Christian instruction harmonized in bringing more order and discipline to the plantation, clearly nothing was at risk. The primary reason for Baptist involvement with Christian instruction was its potential for perpetuating power and cultural ascendancy over the slaves, to maintain the "Southern way of life" for the dominant class. The Gullahs, however, perceived the situation differently.

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how they were given to Moses, then asked the children who wrote the Ten Commandments. She received such answers as "Uncle Sam," "General Saxby" (referring to General Rufus Saxton, Commander of the Department of the South), and "Columbus." On another occasion, a group of students were quizzed by officers in General Sherman's army. The question "Children, who is Jesus Christ?" was at first received with "paralyzed silence." Finally, a small boy loudly ventured, "General Saxby sar." An older boy responsed by giving his classmate "a yigorous thrust in the back" and proclaiming, 'Not so, boy! Him's Massa Linkum."[3] So much for the effectiveness of Methodist catechism and Baptist Sunday School.

Yet the children were heard singing of Jesus constantly. Even at school children consistently sang such "spirituals" as the following:

> Patrol around me. Tank God he no ketch me
> O Lord, yes my Lord
> .....
> In de mornin' when I rise,
> Tell my Jesus Huddy oh, . . .
> .....
> I would not let you go, my Lord,
> I would not let you go,
> .....
> I can't stay behin' my Lord,
> I can't stay behin'[4]

Even adult knowledge of Christianity was severly limited despite their attraction to "things of the spirit." One example was their attitude toward Christmas. Although the Gullahs revered Jesus, few understood the significance of Christmas, the day of Christ's birth. Still it was a joyous season, viewed in slavery primarily as a rare occasion, when fresh meat was allocated, labor ceased for two or three days, and possibly a new suit of clothing was received. Mary Ames taught among the Gullahs on Edisto and Wadmalaw Islands where Methodism was reportedly particularly effective. Yet Ames expressed surprise that the people knew so little of the life of Christ, "not knowing even of his birth." But, she related, "they are all familiar with his sayings." Elizabeth Botume, a Hilton Head teacher, remembered one jubilant Christmastime among the Sea Island "Contrabands," when she was asked to preach:

> I replied that there was but one sermon fitting for the occasion, and I read the whole of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, first explaining to them the meaning of

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the evergreens, typical of Christ's life and teachings. They gave breathless attention to all this, ejaculating from time to time, "My Lord! is dat so?"
I know now they understood very little of all I said, but no speaker ever had more interested and attentive listeners. When I sat down, one of the leaders chanted rather than spoke a touching prayer, in which he styled me his "dear imperial preacher."
Then the white friends sang,—"Joy to the world, the Lord has come."
By this time the entire audience was aroused and ready to pray and sing all night. In each prayer the speaker tried to introduce, in his uncouth phraseology, some of the passages of Scripture he had heard read.[5]

Though lacking a basic background regarding the teachings and historical importance of Christ, Gullahs strongly identified with his suffering, crucifixtion, and resurrection. This, to them, was Christianity, and since they felt their earthly lives so closely paralleled that of Jesus, becoming "Christians" was for Gullahs somewhat of an apocalyptic fulfillment. In fact, much of the essence of their understanding of Protestant religion centered around Jesus and His followers. Other writers have suggested that African-American slaves saw themselves primarily in the same light as the Children of Israel. This association certainly inspired some of the Charleston rebels in 1822, as already discussed. Also, the commander of Gullah troops, Thomas Higginson, stated that the men's memories were a "vast, bewildered chaos of Jewish history and biography," and that most great events from the past, up to "the American Revolution, they instinctively attributed to Moses." How the experience of the Jews aroused the Gullahs was witnessed by a Civil War missionary:

Last week I read to the *church full* the account of the escape of the Children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. I was amazed at the impression it seemed to make. The remarks the old men made were graphic and eloquent. It made them recount with praise to God their escape. The little church seemed like dreamland to me almost when they got stirred to talk.[6]

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Yet most Gullahs conceptualization of Christianity centered on the experiences of Jesus rather than the Jews, as is evident in their songs, prayers, and conversations. The militant nationalism so strongly associated with the Jewish struggle was a prominent ideology of Christian-oriented slaves during the Vesey Conspiracy but was not a major orientation in Gullah religion. Instead, as far as Christianity was concerned, Gullahs relied on a conviction that a moral wrong had been committed

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middle of a sandy cotton field, with cabins on each side in a row." The first building on the street was the Praise House, a paintless, cheerless-appearing building of boards that "looked as if a heavy gale might lay it low." Some antebellum Praise Houses were equipped with a bell (not to be confused with the driver's horn). Several nights during the week, as well as on Sundays, its welcoming, soothing sound brought the people on "the street" together for assembly. The following description, although a post-Civil War one, could easily fit the antebellum scene:

> . . . soon dark figures moved along those countless little footpaths that intersect the plantation in all directions.
>
> The Praise House filled slowly. It was a small one-roomed cabin that looked weirdly alive as you approached it through the darkness. The numerous cracks in roof and walls gave the outlines of the building sketched in streaks of light against the background of the night.
>
> The room was filled with rough backless benches, and at one end was a little table for the leader. Behind this stood a long bench where several men, officers of the Praise House sat facing the people in motionless silence with half-closed eyes and bowed heads.[1]

Most planters erected these meetinghouses after 1840 to afford the slaves a place for worship and to deprive the inhabitants of various plantations of an opportunity to mingle. Yet the Praise House also offered Gullahs a means to free expression. It was not only a place for religious gathering and spiritual solace but was essential to their community structure. At the Praise House, among fellow slaves, Gullahs publicly professed what they considered a satisfactory spiritual experience, as it was necessary to obtain approval from the Praise House congregation before petitioning the master and the Baptist church for membership. If the religious experience was not inspiring enough, or if the elders and the membership doubted the candidate's sincerity, the individual was not recommended for baptism.[2]

In addition to being a means of bringing conformity and spiritual harmony to the slave quarters, the Praise House was very much like a town hall where members of the plantation gathered, using prayer, song, and exhortation to comfort each other. J. Miller McKim, a Northern observer very much interested in Gullah music, wrote in 1862:

> I asked one of these blacks . . . (Prince Rivers, Sergeant, 1st Reg. S.C.V.)—where they got these songs. "Dey make 'em, sah." "How do they make them?" After a pause, evidently casting about for an explanation, he said: "I'll tell you,

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it's dis way. My master call me up, and order me a short peck of corn and a hundred lash. My friends see it, and is sorry for me. When dey come to de praise-meeting dat night dey sing about it."[3]

The slaves' loyalty was to the Praise House rather than to the Baptist church few of them ever attended. Even during Northern occupation and after the Civil War, Gullahs continued to gather at the Praise House whenever trouble befell their community. Despite the fact that white Baptist churches were almost completely under black control during the war (in terms of both structure and organization), the source of power on the plantations was still the Praise House. And after the war, Gullahs continued to see it as the center of group life and to conduct themselves according to Praise House customs and regulations.[4]

Since the Praise House congregation consisted of families who knew, through daily contact, the personal life of a candidate, it was possible to scrutinize behavior and to ostracize an individual, not so much on purely religious grounds as for breaches of trust within the quarters. Elders and members exerted great disciplinary power over plantation hands, having the right to "turn dem outen de Pray's House if dey ain't fur walk right." Hence, while the Gullahs probably attached little significance to church disciplinary measures instituted by the master, but which they, as Praise House members, were forced to implement, a crime against one of their own was a different matter. Long after slavery, the Praise House continued effectively to hold its members responsible for good behavior, and the influence of these small units of the church has long been credited for the fact that crimes were rarely committed among Gullahs. In the 1920s the Beaufort sheriff stated that the Praise Houses kept Gullahs law-abiding even as freedpeople, "because the Negro fears the Lord more than he fears the law." Yet it was not "fear" so much as a desire for harmony and a sense of love and respect for each other that allowed Gullahs to maintain integrity in the community. The significance of Praise House loyalty and community membership as a social regulating force has been observed by researchers as late as the 1970s.[5] Existence of these plantation meetinghouses conformed to the desires of slaveholders, but they also served to strengthen bonds of kinship and a sense of commonwealth among the Gullahs.

Gullahs often expressed time in terms of before or after they "had sense." The concept puzzled Northern teachers who worked among them during the Civil War. "Catching sense," as the Gullahs called it, a term still used today on some Sea Islands, refers to the time when a person

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completes the process of joining the Church and Praise House. According to Patricia Guthrie who did field work in the Sea Islands, "entrance into the religious and the politico-jural domains parallels the time when plantation membership becomes fully realized," or when a person "catches sense." Joining the Praise House formally expressed this initiation into the plantation domain. An individual was no longer merely a member of a household but a citizen of the plantation community, and a member of the Church. Thus personhood was attained through "catching sense." All members had to answer to the religious court system when discord arose. The Praise House law was considered the "just law," and when disputes arose, settlement was reached in the religious court. Praise House membership demanded that all grievances go before this "Committee." The "unjust law" was essentially white law.[6] This raises questions about how plantation membership functioned before widespread Christian teaching by whites, and before freedom. The benne seed ritual indicates that before Methodist missionaries came, plantation depredations against the master did not warrant censure in the slave quarters. It is doubtful that this changed even after slaves "accepted" white Christianity. Internal association among any group is more significant than outside forces, especially if the outside element is an oppressive one. Also, community leaders did not go about seeking wrongdoers. Instead, cases were reported by other church members or by individuals involved in the grievance. Obviously a case brought to the leader's attention by the planter had to be acted upon. But the Gullahs did not view plantation "discipline" from the master's perspective, or as "just law."

The religious court heard both sides of a dispute and encouraged the parties to reach an agreement without input from the Praise House leader or other church members. Usually cases were settled at the first level. If not, the case went to the leader and then to the membership. The religious court system was respected and taken seriously. The small amount of crimes after slavery indicate that few Gullahs came before it and few wanted to be censored for misconduct. The ultimate aim of the religious court was to maintain "peace and harmony" in the community. The Gullahs believed this was best accomplished by settling disputes within the group. There was strong disapproval of anyone who went to the master or, after slavery, to the secular authorities. Such a person did not want a settlement, but to merely create more trouble for the group.[7]

The same attachment to religion and community membership that existed among West Africans was observed among the Gullahs. At the

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time of the Civil War, over half of the adult population of the Sea Islands were church members. Many others were baptized during the Northern occupation, some stating that "they had desired for years to join the church, but could not get leave from their masters." Francis Kemble noted that on the Butler estate on St. Simon's Island, slaves were forbidden to go to church and ministers were not allowed on the plantation. Yet some slaves were willing to endure corporal punishment and were baptized without approval. An American Missionary Association minister observed in 1863 that "the colored people think a good deal of belonging somewhere. This is alright but I fear many of them have been taught to think that joining church was the principal thing." Arthur Sumner recorded an incident that gives insight into the Gullahs propensity to equate communal and secular concerns. The following conversation occurred between Sumner and his housekeeper Patience:

> "How many children you got, Misser Sumner," said she.
> "Not one, thank the Lord."
> "No Chillun?"
> "I'm not married."
> In sheer amazement she sat down and stared at me as little boys do at the muscum.
> "Oh, you'r joking."
> "Fact."
> Then she rolled over, and laughed till she was sore.
> "Not married! Why," said she, "you look settled!"
> She went off, finally, muttering to herself. . . . The next morning she returned to the charge.
> "You a member sure."
> "Eh?"
> "A member, a church member."
> "Neither married nor a member," I replied with solemn voice. She almost dropped my breakfast. She has been trying I see, to comprehend this double phenomenon; but she makes bad work of it. Sometimes I find her looking at me with wonder and commiseration; and if I ask her what she is thinking about she avoids a direct answer.[8]

Sumner's was a kind of individualism which Patience apparently could not fully comprehend. No wife, no children, no membership meant alienation—no place in the community. Gullah religion was not only a contract between God and the individual. It was a mutual agreement among themselves which implied that they could not love God without loving each other. While their common oppression bound them together in one sense, the Gullahs' decision to see themselves as contracting with

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"help" who held Praise House membership, conducted religious services, and oversaw local religious activity was actually more significant than the black elder who might oversee several plantations. Like the elders, spiritual leaders were loved, respected, and faithful in those things pertaining to the welfare of the religious community. The spiritual leaders' influence belonged to a tradition older than the black elders' role.[17] They undoubtedly adjusted to Christianity by making a place for themselves in the heart of it as practiced by Gullahs. Also Baptist elders, though having the interests of the community at heart, may have imbibed too much of the new religion and been too willing to preach and teach conservatism. Thus for the Gullahs, the power of and respect for plantation spiritual parents exceeded that of Baptist-sanctioned elders. The former were healers, interpreters of dreams, signs, and visions, all of which were central to Gullah conceptions of religion and infused with their impressionistic form of Christianity.[18] The functions of the two types of religious leaders may have overlapped to some degree and also complemented each other. They represent different aspects of the Gullahs' spiritual existence—one Christian, the other African—and an element of syncretism within slave religion.

Examination of Gullah methods of admission to church membership is one key to understanding the significance of the spiritual leader's role, Gullah socioreligious spiritualism, and links with a West African past. A candidate's acceptance into the church and subsequently into the Praise House depended upon relating a satisfactory experience, which was the result of a soul-grappling, traumatic confrontation between the individual and a higher power, culminating, if successful, in a sensation of rebirth and full membership in the religious community. The period of transition between the time a desire to become a Christian was expressed and the acceptance by elders of the religious experience was called "seekin'."

The name, "seekin'" was introduced to the Gullahs by Methodist missionaries. At meetings with slaves, after preaching and teaching, the Methodists would then inquire if anyone would like to come forward and "seek Jesus." Those who professed such a desire would then go "on trial" and remain in this limbo status until the missionary deemed them ready for baptism. Probationers, or "seekers of religion," were required by Methodists to know the Creed, Sacraments, and Lord's Prayer, and they were "not eligible for baptism until they had learned them under-

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standingly."[19] It was an impractical expectation, and few of the slaves attempted to provide the missionaries with an "adequate" explanation of religion. Yet true to their adaptive genius, Gullahs embraced the term and devised a unique interpretation of "seeking Jesus" that had little to do with the Methodists' idea, but which the Baptists accepted as proof of "Christian" conversion. A critical and frustrated Methodist missionary provided the *Southern Christian Advocate* with a revealing illustration of the slaves' method of determining religious conversion and their "seekin'" process:

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> When one of these people becomes serious, or "begins to pray" as he would say,—and this is seldom the result of preaching, but most commonly a "warning in a dream,"—it is customary for him to select, by the direction of "the spirit" of course, with some church member of influence, as his spiritual guide. Females are often chosen. Soon after the "vision" in which his teacher is pointed out, he makes known to him his revelation and puts himself under his instruction. These are of a two-fold nature, answering to the two-fold character of the teacher. He is now a prophet to teach him how to conduct himself, and particularly how to pray. He is also "an interpreter of visions" to whom the seeker relates all his "*travel*." This word *travel* . . . is one of the most significant in their language, and comprehends all those exercises, spiritual, visionary and imaginative, which make up an "experience." . . . These travels may differ in some things; and in others they all agree. Each seeker meets with warnings—awful sights or sounds, and always has a vision of a white man who talks with him, warns him, and sometimes makes him carry a burden, and in the end leads him to the river. When the teacher is satisfied with the travel of the seeker, he pronounces "he git thru"; and he is ready for the church. This decision is never questioned by the neophyte. "I prayed under him," says the latter; "he is my spiritual father." Thus the case is settled. The man's religion is endorsed by an authoritative *imprimatur* and heaven is sure. Meanwhile perhaps there has been no solitary conviction of the true nature of sin, no genuine repentance to embitter sin to the soul, no distant apprehension of the sacrifices of the Savior and the merit of his death as the atonement for sin, and the great procuring cause of pardon: in a word, no distant element of Christian experience involved in the whole affair.[20]

The lengthy account failed to mention several other paramount aspects of the "seekin'" experience. First, the seeker was expected, as far as possible, to shun all "social or worldly pleasures." Second, the seeker was required to "go into de wilderness," where the "visions" usually appeared to the candidate and where the travel took place. Solitude and meditation were essential features of the seeking period. Approved and unapproved night vigils were common. Such places as the graveyard,

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normally an absolute taboo for Gullahs (except for the occasion of burials), cotton or corn fields, and the marshes were favorite praying grounds for seekers. Gullahs believed that "Notin' won't hurt you while you bin seekin'." Yet no matter where one prayed, "in de fields and pine woods," "in de bush," "out doors," or "under live oak," all was defined as "de wilderness." It was not generally possible for slaves to withdraw in the literal sense. Often as a gesture of going into the wilderness they would refrain from social interaction, sometimes not even speaking to family members or friends unless it was absolutely necessary, communicating only with their spiritual leader. It was a time of utter prostration for the seeker. Untidy and exceptionally ragged clothing was worn. Female seekers often covered themselves with ash. Seekers wore a "little white cloth or string," around their heads, "jus to mark deirself diffun'." This had to be worn, unwashed, for the duration of the seeking period. During Northern occupation, despairing teachers remarked that children were taken out of school when they became seekers, and since "de trabbel" usually lasted for months, sometimes the entire school was disrupted. From Hilton Head Island, Elizabeth Botume wrote:

> In the winter most of the children were "seeking and praying." The older people said, "They do hang their heads and pray"; and they were not allowed to do much of anything else for fear they would "be turned back.". . . .
>
> These religious revivals were a source of much disturbance in school routine. . . . We cannot call these "religious excitements"; the young seekers were in a stupid and lethargic condition. Some children were not allowed to come to school for fear they would be turned back.[21]

It was not only essential for seekers to relate a satisfactory emotional experience, they also had to declare themselves free of malice toward anyone and ready to abide by rules of the church via society control. Hence the Praise House operated as the extending influence on behavior in the slave quarters. While the seekers' dream experiences varied, they first had to be bad, fearful dreams, which the spiritual parent explained. As the seeker's "experience" neared an end, metamorphosis was indicated by, among other things, a profession of charity for others. This was always an important part of their spiritual affirmation:

> "You think you are converted?"
>
> "Yes, . . . I' so lovin! I loves ebery body—all de trees, an' de chicken, an' de peoples; I loves ebery ting an' ebery body. . . ."[22]

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More important than feelings of guilt and sinfulness, so fundamental to Christian conversion, was the seeker's desire to become a part of the community. The more intense the "trabbel" or "vision," the more dramatic the integration into society.

The mystical nature of the slaves' conversion experience involved a travel during which seekers often prayed and spoke to religious nature objects rather than to God.[23] As the Methodist informant noted, this was not linked to a Christian tradition. Literature on the previously discussed secret cultural associations of the Windward Coast peoples is limited, since even today ethnic groups generally refuse to discuss them. Nevertheless, there is enough existing material on this tradition to suggest secret society link with Gullah concepts of conversion, personhood, and group membership as practiced within and reinforced by Christianity.

Initiation into the Poro and Sande contained two central components—contact with spirits and extended instruction, both aimed at socialization of the individual and preparation for an active communal role. Among the Kuranko, Mano, Limba, Mende, Temne, Gola, and other ethnic groups, withdrawal from organized society into the bush was clearly related to a type of release through transcendence, commonly expressed as a lonely, spiritual journey or travel on which the initiate becomes acquainted with death. The Poro and Sande were the universal male and female cultural societies of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and parts of Gambia. Boys and girls usually entered the bush school at puberty, but at separate periods and for different lengths of time. Sande initiates, like Gullah females, wore a white head tie, called "the white thing," and covered their faces with white clay while Gullah female seekers used ash. The *Mazowo* (high priestess) always wore white and was envisioned thusly by initiates. Withdrawal from village society was a ritualistic death. Initiates were taken into a sacred designated area of the bush by Poro-Sande priests and priestesses, called altar mothers and fathers. Here they symbolically took leave of earth and journeyed down into the spirit world, the world of the dead. Among some groups, the Mano, for example, these spirits were ancestors. For others, the Kuranko and Limba, they were spirits the initiates encountered, spirits who were nameless, capricious, quasi-human nature beings sometimes occupying streams, rivers, and mountains. In any case, contact with these spirits represented a form of demise and in their realm initiates dwelled during the entire period of segregation. The boys and girls conversed with the spirits and related these

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in their offspring, sparing no expense in efforts to make the neophytes as radiant as possible. After initiates were dressed in their new finery, they gathered in the meetinghouse with friends and family, "where in a public ceremony they are handed over to their parents with great acclamation."[30]

Among Gullahs, a "seeker" related an acceptable experience to the spiritual leader and declared a profession of faith to the Praise House members. At an appointed time, the church elder and his "help" would then further examine the individual to determine readiness for baptism. Laura Towne witnessed such a prebaptismal examination on St. Helena:

> . . . father Tom and his bench of elders examined candidates for baptism and asked Ellen to record their names. Each candidate clad in the oldest, dirtiest clothes,.with a cloth band round their forehead stood humbly before the bench. Father Tom, looking like Jupiter, grave, powerful and awfully dignified put the most posing questions to which the candidates replied meekly but promptly. They asked the satisfactory candidate at last, "how do you pray." Then the soft, musical voice made the coaxing, entreating kind of prayer which they use so much, and a nod dismissed the applicant. Another was called up at once. There were seventy to be examined.[31]

Following examination, the candidates were ready for their water burial, which took place on communion Sunday morning. Teacher David Thorpe wrote of one occasion in 1863 when "upwards of one hundred and forty people," of all ages, were baptized. It was for him a "strange and picturesque scene." The people gathered from "far and near," in all manner of vehicles and "in every kind of attire." The candidates arrived "dressed for the water," according to Thorpe, "in miserable looking clothing," with their heads tied up in handkerchiefs. Nearby, among the bushes were mule carts loaded with garments for the converts to put on after the baptism. The white minister, Mr. Phillips, read off each candidate's name, and "Old Pa Tom" nodded his approval of their examination. All headed down to the water:

> The ceremony was performed by the roadside near a bridge where the road crossed the creek. "Siah" "leader" at "Good William Fripp's" took the arm of Mr. Phillips and together they entered the water. Around on every side were hundreds of people arrayed in their Sunday best. Their shiny black faces surmounted by bright turbans and white turbans. . . . They presented a beautiful sight today. Truly the sun shone out on a beautiful scene. . . . On the bridge in the crowd a few eager white faces could be seen peeping out, while on the grove near the water were other white friends . . .—near the water stood a large

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band of singers and they sent up hymn after hymn during the exercises. Mr. Phillips and Siah went into the water. The Pastor extended his hands and his whole flock of candidates went forward into the water. Each one seemed to be attended by several friends or relatives, who besides being bodily support carried dry clothing, shawls, cloaks and overcoats. . . . They all gathered about the minister and Siah. Mr. Phillips took them in turn—each by one shoulder while Siah laid hold of the other and together they immersed them, over one hundred and forty. As fast as they had been baptized they stepped to the shore, though before they reached there, their friends received them and shuffled them up . . . and hurried them off into the bushes. It took a long time to get through with so many, but after a while it was over and we all went back to church. All the candidates came out in shiny robes. . . . There was a great difference in their looks when they came into the church the second time. Then we had a long service after which the right hand of fellowship was given and . . . the sacrament was administered to them.[32]

Resemblance is noted between the African secret society candidates' "turning out" and the Gullahs' "baptizin'." Both situations represented the emergence of a new individual whose status as a full member of the community was illustrated by a water burial. This new position was not only expressed by immersion but by the wearing of new garments and partaking of a communion service with family, friends, and, in the case of Gullahs, only "true believers" of the Baptist faith. In both instances the event was as impressive as it was significant. Like the new Christians, African initiates returning from the bush were considered "newborns from the belly of the Devil." All claims against them were forgiven and they were not responsible for any contract or behavior displayed prior to being devoured by the devil and reemerging as new beings.[33]

No ceremony symbolized an individual's initiation into the church and community more than baptism. For Gullahs, this had to be total immersion. Even those salves who joined the Methodist church usually insisted on total immersion rather than "mere sprinkling." Perhaps this preference was a latent memory of secret society initiation, with total immersion representing absolute commitment to the Gullahs' socioreligious culture. It is also possible that, as some Methodist missionaries believed, Gullahs were confident that "baptism by total immersion is a means of a present, full and eternal salvation; and that after you have been baptized, it is impossible to sin or fall from grace."[34] Yet the most significant feature of the Gullahs' attachment to total immersion may have been that this black community interpreted performance of the rite as symbolically

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adding to a collective attitude in the quarters. Total immersion was exclusively their way of being baptized and, although a Christian service, the pomp, color, and ceremony was original to the slaves. The Gullahs' method of baptism, with its solemn pageantry, had African antecedents as well as Christian form. But more important, from the slaves' point of view, the rite was uniquely a prerequisite for community stature within their own society.

Gullah efforts to construct an organized harmonious social system was further illustrated by the fact that, while collective affiliation in the slave quarters was most significant, a sense of individual fulfillment was also essential. Hence, while "seekin'" culminated in acceptance of socialization through church membership, the experience itself was a private one and the desire to "seek Jesus" was a slave's personal decision, although not devoid of community pressure. The travel, the visions, and the solitude possibly represented a bondsperson's inner reflection and recognition of "self" as opposed to his or her treatment as "thing" by the master. Efforts toward acquiring a valuable self-image is related in the slave's dependence on the spiritual parent who listened to and interpreted individual experiences. The significance of individual experience also had its source in the personal attachment to and identification with Christ, prophets, and disciples rather than to perceived abstractions and inapplicable doctrines within Christianity. Moreover, Gullah cultural achievements represent manifestations of individual creativity as well as collective will and fortitude.

In the Gullah socioreligious community, exclusiveness served collective goals perhaps in the way that secrecy in Poro and Sande expressed loyalty, solidarity, and trust. One illustration of this was the practice of close communion among Gullahs. Close communion was actually an elitist doctrine which the slaves apparently adopted from their Calvinist-oriented Baptist slavemasters. American Missionary Association ministers stated that the Gullahs practiced close communion before they came. "I find that the colored people understand the doctrine of 'close communion' perfectly well," wrote the Reverend Augustine Roots from Port Royal in 1863. "I have however said, myself nothing about the matter of communion." This was not the opinion of Laura Towne. She related that a white Baptist minister, Mr. Horton, informed the Gullahs that no one "who taught different doctrines" had any right "even to stand in the pulpit." Horton further told the Gullahs that those with different reli-

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African initiation, beginning with a symbolic death, a journey to the spirit world, and complete rupture with one's past life and personality, was a time of lethargy, isolation, and prostration. As a result of contact with the spirits (nameless objects or ancestors) while in the bush, the novice's personality was modified in the image of a deity, and the individual was said to have become godlike through association—hence the Mano term "little spirits of the bush." Spirit possession took place during bush-life, itself represented as a period of unconsciousness when the initiate departed the domain of reason. The neophyte emerged from the experience "reborn," with a secondary spiritual personality inculcated as a type of conditioned reflex. When cultural and environmental forces interacted with these individual personalities from similar traditions, a psychological, collective process that was rarely conscious could be stimulated. The baptism or "sacred bath" purged the initiate's mind of previous attitudes, and future behavior would be an emulation of the true spirit within, or "little me."[43] Hence possession behavior can be interpreted as part of a society's efforts to incorporate into a coherent system the natural and supernatural worlds. Since possession was a public ceremony, where one demonstrated his or her individual spiritual presence in a sharing experiental manner, the phenomenon can be seen as solidifying human collectivity and providing a further basis for the participants to create a socioreligious network of communication and interaction. In the following description of a shout recorded more than fifty years after slavery, it illustrates possession in full force among Sea Island blacks, and suggests how certain African religious cult themes could have been retained. This shout, in a St. Helena Island Praise House, involved "welcoming and initiating" three teenage boys baptized into the church that morning. The Praise House leader announced that, "After givin' de right han' of fellowship to dese t'ree boys," the benediction would take place, after which "we'll gib dese boys de opportunity to exercise deyselbes wid de shout." The new converts were allowed to begin and demonstrate their ability to "exercise deyselbes." As people pushed back the benches, there was laughter and conversation as the shout began. The three youths stamped the floor, clapped their hands rhythmically, and moved around and around the open space in the center of the floor, "which was walled in by encouraging older people and other young people, all singing "De bell dun rung." The people commented on the shouters, such expressions as "Yoner look at Johnny, he exercise fur tru enty?"

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in the slave quarters, this did not imply total acceptance of a Judeo-Christian concept of reality. The Gullahs broadened the meaning of Christianity, organizing and integrating it into past beliefs and practices. Two traditions formed the basis of the Gullahs' struggle against slavery. The example of Christ allowed them to take a superior attitude toward their oppressors. But they also exerted spiritual and psychological autonomy by clinging to Africanity. In their isolation, the Gullahs remained an uprooted people whose acceptance of Christianity was sometimes outward, selective, and subject to reinterpretations which would not force them to relinquish old ways entirely. Of course, African beliefs, where these remained, accommodated the slave situation just as Christianity, to some extent, accommodated African religion and philosophy. Where Protestantism did not tolerate Africanity as a separate expression, Africanisms sometimes continued through secretiveness or by finding a place at the center of Protestantism as practiced by the slaves.

As Lawrence Levine notes, freedom placed the slaves in a culturally marginal situation, and weakened their "cultural self-containment." No longer were values and cultural standards determined from within the group. African-Americans found themselves in a bicultural situation, absorbing elements of the dominant society in order to obtain recognition and privileges. Perhaps at the moment of freedom the period of accommodation began as a significant factor in black life. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the organization of the black church. This point may be most easily illustrated by the motif of the gospel songs and their otherworldly context, whereas the slave spirituals were full of camouflaged prayers for freedom. As Levine points out, the period after bondage reflects a changing consciousness.[3] Slave religion bred radicalism in the early years, and progressivism later. The institutionalized black church, formed after freedom, was far more powerful and independent, but often counseled conservatism.

Sam Polite lived long past bondage. He was over one hundred years old when he prayed the prayer of "The Long Look." He had grown up in slavery, lived through emancipation, reconstruction, restoration, and into the twentieth century of segregation. Still he prayed the prayer of hope. Still he asked for a sign—a look at the future for his people. Polite's prayer implied what history has revealed—that the "New Jerusalem" evaded the African-Americans after freedom. The emancipation experience, born of hope and optimism, brought a new kind of bondage.

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APPENDIX B

Excerpts from a "Missionary Sketch" Written by Thomas D. Turpin to the Christian Advocate and Journal, January 31, 1834.

. . . the number of adults to whom I had access in preaching were about 1,000, one third of whom were in the Baptist Church and in the negroes societies, and almost all of them under Baptist influence; and that a great many of those lived on an island who scarcely ever saw the pastor of the Church to which they belong. Hence they had societies organized among themselves; and that those societies were very corrupt, and appeared to be very much under the influence of Roman Catholic principles; and that they did penance, and the following was a specimen, viz; that they had three degrees of punishment, and that the punishment was inflicted agreeably to the magnitude of the crime, according to their view of the crime. If the crime was of the first magnitude, the perpetrator had to pick up a quart of benne seed poured on the ground by the priest; and if of the second, a quart of rice; and if of the third, a quart of corn; and that they also had high seats and low seats, but incorrect views relative to those who ought to be punished; and that it was also a rule among them never to divulge the secret of stealing; and if it should be divulged by any one member, that one had to go on the low seat, or pick up the benne seed. I observed, having to contend with all this superstition and

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799 ignorance, together with their prejudices against Methodism, that I had added very few to the Church; and I had, moreover, strived very little to do this, but rather strived to beat down their prejudices and to establish a better principle of religion among them, all of which I should not presume any person in this low country would attempt to contradict.

But it appears to have injured the feelings of many of the Baptist friends. I did not intend to injure their feelings, nor any other persons. Notwithstanding, though it has been said, that I have shot a ball particularly at the Baptists, and in its glance it has hit the Episcopalians. If it has made any mortal wound by its being received in a light different from what I intended I feel it my duty to heal the wound.

799 In regard to the words Baptist influence, it has also been observed, that it has generally been received as intending to mean that the whites • 795 have knowledge of those corruptions among the negroes, and tolerate them. I had no such meaning. I simply meant that the negroes were under the peculiar influence of the Baptist tenets. Now, unless the Baptist tenets tolerate the doing of penance (which the world knows to the contrary), it could not mean that they tolerated these things among the negroes. It is notorious that almost all of the negroes in the bounds of my mission are prejudiced in favor of the Baptist Church.

681 As it respects the picking up of the benne seed, it has been said that it was not a very likely thing that it could be done in one night. In answer to this, I heard a gentleman say, no longer than last week, that the rule was, if it was not done in one night, they had to continue until 795 they did it—Again, as regards those of whom I spoke, who scarcely ever saw the pastor of the Church to which they belong, they were a set of negroes belonging to Andrew Marshall's church of Savannah. It may be objected that Andrew Marshall is nothing more than a negro. If he is, that does not derogate at all from the truth of the assertion made in the letter stated above. The negro has been authorized by the Church to preach and baptize.—He has done it, and he has baptized a great many in this low country; and those of whom I spoke are in that number. He is the only pastor that those negroes have on the island. He never comes to see them, nor any other Baptist minister. Therefore the facts remains, there are many negroes on Bull's Island that scarcely ever see the pastor of the Church to which they belong. This is the light in which I in- [799] tended it should be received . . . the little negroes improve on the mission, but the adults are about the same as represented in the above statement.

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APPENDIX C

Baptist Churches

TABLE C.1
State of the Churches within the Savannah River Baptist Association in 1833

	Churches	*Constituted*	*Number Baptized*	*Membership*
*	1 Euhaw	1745	43	841
	2 Beach Branch	1759	65	132
	3 Healing Springs	1772	7	143
*	4 Pipe Creek	1776	38	287
	5 Treadaway	1776	6	66
	6 Columbia	1780	2	115
*	7 Black Swamp	1786	11	294
	8 Great Saltcatcher	1793	59	127
	9 Barnwell	1803	13	126
	10 Springtown	1803	66	244
*	11 Beaufort	1804	239	1,292
	12 Rosemary	1804	11	114
	13 Willow Swamp	1805	0	34
	14 Union	1805	7	220
	15 Little Saltcatcher	1807	21	50
*	16 St. Helena	1809	138	536
*	17 May River	1811	36	621
	18 Beulah	1811	0	20
*	19 Prince Williams	1813	70	140
	20 Steep Bottom	1814	3	44
	21 Cypress Creek	1814	41	144
	22 Double Ponds	1825	1	58
	23 Philadelphia	1827	9	75
	24 Kirkland	1827	12	162
	25 Black Creek	1827	69	111
	26 M't Pleasant	1828	4	38

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TABLE C.1 *(continued)*

State of the Churches within the Savannah River Baptist Association in 1833

Churches	*Constituted*	*Number Baptized*	*Membership*
27 3 Mile Creek	1829	29	64
28 Matlock	1830	0	33
29 Bethesda	1830	8	30
30 Steel Creek	1830	23	71
31 Joico's Branch	1831	3	30
32 Ebenezer	1831	3	21
33 Coosawatchie	1832	34	196
34 Beach Island	1832	0	38
*35 Hilton Head	1832	86	212
36 Sardia	1833	14	33
37 Pleasant Prospect	1833	0	43
Total		471	6,805

*Beaufort District churches with large memberships and which are on or near the Sea Islands.
Source: Minutes of the Savannah River Baptist Association, November 23, 1833, 11, BC.

TABLE C.2

State of the Churches within the Savannah River Baptist Association in 1842

Churches	*Number Baptized*	*Membership*	*By Whom Supplied*
*Euhaw	. . . No Report . . .		W. A. Lawton
Beach Branch	0	71	E. Estes
Healing Springs	1	104	D. Peeples
*Pipe Creek	12	131	I. Nicholes
Treadaway	1	31	H. D. Duncan
Columbia	17	141	L. M. Brown
*Black Swamp	13	278	George Kempton
Great Saltcatcher	18	130	James Fant
Barnwell	2	140	D. Peeples, M. Shoares
Springtown	0	183	L. B. Brown
*Beaufort	152	1,947	R. Fuller
Rosemary	0	111	D. Peeples
Union	8	240	H. Z. Ardis
Little Saltcatcher	0	70	George Walker
*St. Helena	61	762	W. Hall
*May River	30	888	W. A. Lawton
*Prince Williams	. . . No Report . . .		L. G. Bowers

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Churches	*Number Baptized*	*Membership*	*By Whom Supplied*
Deep Bottom	1	33	C. J. Robert
Cypress Creek	0	37	I. Nix
Philadelphia	4	87	L. M. Brown
Smyrna	3	207	M. Shoares
Black Creek	. . . No Report . . .		(No Pastor)
Mount Pleasant	. . . No Report . . .		(No Pastor)
St. John's	1	3	George Walker
Matlock	0	9	(No Pastor)
Bethesda	0	57	William Baxley
Steel Creek	19	131	H. Z. Ardis
Joico's Branch	25	73	H. D. Duncan
*Coosawhatchie	. . . No Report . . .		H. D. Duncan
Beach Island	5	189	H. Z. Ardis
Friendship	0	66	(No Pastor)
*Hilton Head	. . . No Report . . .		(No Pastor)
Sardia	9	34	John Youmans
Pleasant Prospect	. . . No Report . . .		(No Pastor)
Sandy Run	11	61	J. Fant
Gent's Branch	9	32	(No Pastor)
Beaver Dam	1	43	John Youmans
M't Temperance	. . . No Report . . .		(No Pastor)
Long Beach	. . . No Report . . .		J. Munch
Beulah	14	51	J. Fant
Union, Colleton	0	20	W. Price, B. Ferguson
Mount Aaron	2	33	Joseph A. Lawton
Three Lower Runs	2	39	Joseph A. Lawton
Doctor's Creek, Colleton	0	76	(No Pastor)
Total	421	6,508	

*Beaufort District churches with large memberships and which are on or near Sea Islands.
Source: Minutes of the Savannah River Baptist Association, November 26, 1842, 16, BC.

TABLE C.3
State of the Churches within the Savannah River Baptist Association in 1851

Churches	*Baptized*	*Black Members*	*White Members*	*Total*
*Euhaw	8	442	32	474
Beach Branch	12	70	64	140
Healing Springs	0	23	31	54
*Pipe Creek	20	No Breakdown		179
Columbia	0	No Breakdown		146

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TABLE C.3 *(continued)*

State of the Churches within the Savannah River Baptist Association in 1851

Churches	*Baptized*	*Black Members*	*White Members*	*Total*
*Black Swamp	10	259	64	323
Great Saltcatcher	0	43	106	149
Barnwell	1	71	3	105
Springtown	8	73	107	180
*Beaufort	32	2,477	196	2,673
Rosemary	3	20	98	118
Union	6	148	39	187
Little Saltcatcher	4	17	162	179
*St. Helena	16	866	34	900
*May River	25	510	30	540
Steep Bottom	9	54	38	92
Cypress Creek	0	14	46	60
Philadelphia	9	120	10	130
Smyrna	7	223	43	266
St. John's	0	6	30	36
Matlock	20	26	70	96
Bethesda	9	11	91	102
Steel Creek	2	64	11	75
Joico's Branch	0	1	57	58
*Coosawhatchie	29	258	38	296
Beach Island	19	22	38	60
Friendship	0	No Breakdown		90
*Hilton Head	1	106	2	108
Black Creek, Colleton	0	No Breakdown		104
Pleasant Prospect	5	No Breakdown		57
Sandy Run	17	44	56	100
Gent's Branch	0	7	38	45
Beaver Dam	0	1	40	41
Long Beach	3	12	75	87
Union, Colleton	0	No Breakdown		25
Mount Aaron	0	3	37	40
Lower Three Runs	1	No Breakdown		38
Doctor's Creek, Colleton	8	No Breakdown		47
Round O	0	No Breakdown		48
Great Swamp	0	15	18	33
Blackville	0	15	55	70
Sand Hill	10	No Breakdown		35
Bedon's	0	No Breakdown		44
Peniel	12	No Breakdown		66
Mount Olive	2	6	17	23

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Churches	*Baptized*	*Black Members*	*White Members*	*Total*
Cypress Chapel	0	0	22	22
Bethel	0	No Breakdown		12
Beulah	0	25	7	32
Total	308	6,052	1,805	9,282

[1] Beaufort District churches with large memberships and which are on or near the Sea Islands. These churches claimed 4,918 members out of a total black membership return of 6,052. Most of the 4,918 blacks were members of the Sea Island congregations at Beaufort, St. Helena, May River, and Hilton Head.

Source: Minutes of the Savannah River Baptist Association, November 22, 1851, 20, BC.

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113 stille, March 2, 1831, Tristram Verstille Papers, SCL; *Minutes of the Savannah River Baptist Association*, 1802, October 17, 1817, November 27, 1830, BC.

175 2. James Busch, "The Beaufort Baptist Church," Beaufort County Historical Society
799 Paper, n.d., 13, Beaufort Township Library, Beaufort, South Carolina; *CAJ*, January 6,
113 1832; William M. Baker, *The Life and Labours of the Reverend Daniel Baker, D. D., Pastor & Evangelist* (Philadelphia: William & Alfred Martien, 1859), 145–56; James H. Cuthbert, *Life of Richard Fuller* (New York: Sheldon Co., 1879), 67–68; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 22, 1831, 24, November 26, 1831, 18, 20, November 23, 1833, 10,
• [795] BC; see Appendix C.[A] Table C.1 lists the churches within the Savannah River Baptist Association in 1833, and indicates the number of baptisms for that year.

175 3. *Minutes of the Euhaw Baptist Church, 1831–1875*, December 21, 1831, 11, February 18,
799 1832, 12, June 23, 1832, 16, August, 1832, 18, SCL; James W. Busch, "Beaufort Church,"
563 15; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 79–82, 104–5; Rosengarten, *Tumbo*, 147. Some Episcopalian
113 planters participating in the 1831 revival subsequently became liberal contributors to the Methodist cause of religious instruction of the slaves. *Minutes of the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, February 10, 1836, 22, January 9, 1839, 18–19, HSSCC; *CAJ*, January 26, 1838. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 20, 1834, BC.

4. Appendix C,[A] see tables C.1 and C.2. The fluctuation noticeable in the membership of mainland churches occurred because new churches drew members away from older congregations. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November, 1834, taken from the pages of the *Southern Baptist and General Intelligencer*, January 3, 1835, BC.

5. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 21, 1835, 4, BC; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 16; Charles C. Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes of the United States* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969; repr. from 1842 ed.), 96–98; Chalmers D. Davidson, *The Last Foray: The South Carolina Plantations in 1860: A Sociogical Study* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1975), 96–98.

6. Bynum Shaw, *Divided We Stand: The Baptists in American Life* (Durham: Moore Publishing, 1874), 113–14; Newman, *Baptist Church in the United States*, 304–6; Guion G. Johnson, *A Social History of the Sea Islands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), 45, 103–4, 117; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 15; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 24, 1849, BC. William W. Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845–1953* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954), 19; H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But . . . Racism in Southern Religion, 1780–1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1972), 53–55; Reverend Dr. Richard Furman, *Exposition of the Views of the Baptists, Relative to the Colored Population in the United States, in A Communication to the Governor of South Carolina* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1823), 6.

7. Shaw, *Divided We Stand*, 113–16; Barnes, *Southern Baptist Convention*, 20–21; Smith, *In His Image, But*, 117–21, 127–28; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 227; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, September 12, 1840, 9, BC; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 21, 1835, 4, November 25, 1837, 5, October 24, 1840, 3, BC.

175 8. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 24, 1838, 6, November 23, 1839,
113 11, October 23, 1841, 12, November 26, 1842, 4–5.

9. Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 153, 227; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 16; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 21, 1835, 4, BC.

10. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 25, 1841, BC.

11. Jones, *Religious Instruction*, 210–11; John B. Adger, D. D., *My Life and Times, 1810–1899* (Richmond, Va.: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1899), 198–99; *Proceedings*

A. [For Appendix C, see Category 795, pp. 337-339--Analyst]

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Beaufort Baptist Church, Membership Rolls, and see Appendix C, tables C.1 and C.2; *Minutes, Euhow Baptist Church*, 11–12, 14, 16, 18–19, 32, 55–56, 58, 66–68, 70; Jones, "Old Black Swamp Church."

23. Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 79–82; Stoney, "Autobiography of Grayson," 36; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, passim, BC; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 13–17. Within this same article is a section entitled "Richard Fuller and Slavery," 11; and see Appendix C, tables C.1 and C.2.

24. Johnson, *Social History*, 103; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 15–20, 67–79; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 14–16.

25. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, passim, BC; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 81–106; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 14–16.

26. "Former Slaves Recollect Fuller," in Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 106–113; Charlotte Forten, "Life on the Sea Islands," Part I, *Atlantic Monthly* 13 (May, 1864): 589–90.

27. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 26, 1853, 10–11; November 25, 1854, 16; November 14, 1857, 10–11, BC; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, July 12, 1857, 2–3, 35; November 7, 1857, 241–43, BC.

28. This is an estimate and represents population based on the 1830 census returns. U.S. Census Office, *Sixth Census, 1840* (Washington: T. Allen, 1841), 95; see Appendix C. tables C.1 and C.3.

29. See Appendix C, table C.2; U.S. Census, *Sixth Census*, 95–96, 226–27; *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 22, 1845, 16, BC; *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 48–50; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, 273, BC.

30. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 25, 1848, 5, November 1859, BC; see Appendix C, table C.3.

31. Baker, *Life of Labours*, 155–56; Busch, "Beaufort Church," 13; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 15–16, 64–65, 67–75; John Stapleton Papers, SCL, have information on the Rhetts, who bought Frogmore Plantation, St. Helena, from Stapleton in 1836; Jones, "Old Black Swamp Church"; Charlotte Verstille to Nancy Verstille, March 2, 1821, Tristram Verstille Papers, SCL; Diary of John Edwin Fripp, Beaufort Township Library; For Princeton preference see "Notes and Documents; Antebellum and War Memories of Mrs. Telfair Hodgson," Sarah Hodgson Torian, ed., *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (December, 1953): 352; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 88–91; Johnson, *Social History*, 103–11; Hill Diary, SHC; Baptist Church at Black Swamp Mss., Lawton Family Papers, SCL; George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, 19 vols., *South Carolina Narratives*, vols. 2 and 3 in 4 Parts (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing), II (1) 155–58, 161–62; Jenkins Mikell, *Rumblings of the Chariot Wheels* (Columbia: The State Co., 1923), 201; Johnson, *Social History*, 114–15; Henry Noble Sherwood, ed., Introduction, "Journal of Miss Susan Walker, March 3d to June 6, 1862," *Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio* 7 (January–March, 1912): 5.

32. Mikell, *Chariot Wheels*, 201–2; Frank Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record*, Supp. 1 (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1871), 197–202; William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 353–56; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 140–43, 203–11; Mason Crum, *Gullah, Negro Life in the Carolina Sea Islands* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940), 35–54.

33. Edward L. Pierce, "The Freedmen at Port Royal," *Atlantic Monthly*, 12 (September, 1863): 295.

34. Janet Duitsman Cornelius, "God's Schoolmaster: Southern Evangelists to the Slaves, 1830–1860," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), 16–22; Cuthbert, *Life of Fuller*, 140–58.

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BC. A good example of how little attention some masters paid to slaves is provided in the T. B. Chaplin Journal, edited by Theodore Rosengarten. Chaplin probably spent more time supervising his property than most Sea Island planters. However Rosengarten writes: "Because Chaplin had very little to do with his slaves outside of work, we seldom see them in their quarters and only then when peace is disturbed." T. B. Chaplin was on the Episcopalian side of the family and "appears to have invested nothing in the spiritual welfare of his slaves." Some of his slaves did join the Island Baptist church through the "praise house." Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 145, 147, 151.

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46. *Minutes, Savannah River Baptist Association*, November 25, 1854, November 23, 1855, BC; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, June 10, 1843, 61–62, September 4, 1852, 171, September 12, 1854, 197, November 7, 1857, 241–42, BC; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 147; Pierce Butler to A. Marvin, March 19, 1839, Letterbook, 1838–1840, box 38, Wistar Papers, Butler Section, HSP.

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47. James Leo Garrett, Jr., *Baptist Church Discipline: An Historical Introduction to the Practices of Baptist Churches, with Particular Attention to the Summary of Church Discipline Adopted in 1773 by the Charleston Association* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1962), 3–4, 10–18, 28; King, *South Carolina Baptists*, 62–63. The Baptist religion as it developed in the Lowcountry from Georgetown southward to the Beaufort District was considerably different from that planted in the upcountry. The latter was closer to the frontier Baptist tradition. Unlike "Regular" Baptists of the Lowcountry, the "frontier theology" was a compromise of Arminian and Calvinist views. King, *South Carolina Baptists*, 38, 148; Sidney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 440–43.

48. Garrett, *Baptist Church Discipline*, 39–44; J. William Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 100–04; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 180–81; King, *South Carolina Baptists*, 38, 148–55; Daniel W. Hollis, "The Role of the Church in South Carolina History," *Journal of the South Carolina Baptist Historical Society* 4 (November, 1978): 11–13; Smith, *In His Image, But*, Chapter 2.

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49. *Minutes, Euhaw Baptist Church*, passim, SCL; *Minutes, Baptist Church at Black Creek*, 1828–1922, 15–59, SCL; Jones, "Old Black Swamp Church"; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, October 9, 1840, 10–11, BC; For information about discipline of slaves in other churches, see Cornelius, "God's Schoolmasters," 228–40; Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry*, 48–52.

50. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, August 12, 1843, 61–62.

51. Ibid., November 11, 1840, 12, April 5, 1852, 166, October 7, 1859, 272–73.

52. Ibid., October 8, 1840, 11, July 9, 1841, 19, July 8, 1842, 34; September 8, 1843, 63; April 5, 1855, 203–4.

53. Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina*, II (2) 184; Allen Diary, 23, 57.

54. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, November 9, 1844, 83, April 5, 1852, 166, October 7, 1859, 272–73, BC; *Minutes, Euhaw Baptist Church*, February 5, 1832, 11, September 1848, 75, SCL.

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55. Fripp Diary, 60, Beaufort Township Library; Johnson, *Social History*: 47, 54; Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina*, III (3) 200–201, 272; Diary of William F. Allen, 62, in William F. Allen Family Papers, 1775–1937, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison.

56. John W. Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 374, 381; Forten, "Sea Islands," Part I, 668; Diary of Laura M. Towne, 15, Penn School Papers, SHC.

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74. Forten, "Sea Islands," Part I, 594; Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 157–58.

75. *CAJ*, August 18, 1837; *SCA*, July 7, 1843, August 21, 1840, February 3, 1841, September 29, 1843.

76. As far as total immersion was concerned, Methodist missionaries were willing to baptize slaves in this manner if the slaves so desired. *CAJ*, February 7, 1834; John L. Field to George W. Moore, March 21, 1833 HSSCC; *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, passim, BC; Rawick, *American Slave, South Carolina*, II (2) 184–85; III (3) 202.

77. Towne Diary, 26, 54; Pearson, *Letters from Port Royal*, 26–28; *CAJ*, January 31, 1834, November 20, 1835, July 22, 1836; *SCA*, May 1, 1840, April 8, 1842, June 26, 1843, July 28, 1843.

78. *SCA*, February 16, 1844, October 30, 1846.

79. *SCA*, July 28, 1843; *Proceedings of Charleston Meeting*, 29–50; Russell, *My Diary*, 77; James R. Stuart Recollections, n.d. (around 1850), SHC; *SCA*, March 30, 1849, May 12, 1849, September 6, 1850, July 5, 1855.

80. *SCA*, May 18, 1849; Rosengarten, *Tombee*, 145–47; Fripp Diary, 9, 18, 40, 47, Towne Diary, 22.

8. Elements of the Head and the Heart: Gullah Interpretations of Christianity

1. "The Long Look," 2–3, undated sketch of a former slave, Sam Polite, who lived to be over 100 years old, Penn School Papers, vol. 1, SHC. For discussions on the Union victory at Port Royal see Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 3–12; Theodore Rosengarten, *Tombee: Portrait of a Cotton Planter, Journal of Thomas B. Chaplin, 1812–1890* (New York: William Morrow, 1986), 202–22.

2. Randall Hunt, "Journal of a Traveller from Charleston, S. C. to New Haven, Conn., 1832," SCHS; "South Carolina through New England Eyes, Elmira Coffin's Visit to the Low Country in 1851," SCHS; William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, ed. Fletcher Pratt (New York: Harper Brothers, 1854), Charles Joyner, *Down By the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 154–59, 161–63, 229–30; "All Saints, Waccamaw, the Parish, the Place, the People, 1739–1948," Beaufort Township Library, South Carolina, Society of Colonial Dames of America, 22–24, 30–33, 38–43. Joyner's book is a reconstruction of black life in All Saints Parish.

3. W. T. Richardson to Rev. S. S. Jocelyn, June 19, 1863, Lydia Fuller to Rev. S. S. Jocelyn, July 5, 1864, AMA; Diary of William F. Allen in William F. Allen Family Papers, 1775–1937, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 144; Elizabeth Hyde Botume, *First Days Amongst the Contrabands* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1968; repr. from 1893 ed.), 91–92, 112–14.

4. Edward L. Pierce, "The Freedom at Port Royal," *Atlantic Monthly*, 12 (September, 1863): 304; Laura M. Towne to James McKim, February 1, 1862, Antislavery Papers, Rare Book Room, Cornell University; Allen Diary, 96, 127–28, 151–52.

5. Mary Ames, *From a New England Woman's Diary in Dixie* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969; repr. from 1906 ed.), 68; Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 74–75.

6. Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 43; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 320–21; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (New York: Collier Books, 1962, repr. from 1870 ed.), 49; Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*,

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164–66; Edwin S. Williams to Rev. S. S. Jocelyn, January 28, 1863, AMA. For an interesting discussion of the fusion of Old and New Testament figures, see Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 252–55.

7. George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, 19 vols., *South Carolina Narratives*, vols. 2 & 3, in 4 parts (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing, 1972), II (2) 180–91.

8. Charlotte Forten, "Life on the Sea Islands," Part II, *Atlantic Monthly* 13 (June, 1864): 672.

9. Mansfield French to Revs. Whipple and Jocelyn, n.d., AMA; Ira Berlin, ed., *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861–1867, Series II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 49–50; Allen Diary, 57–58; Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction*, 145–48; Diary of Laura M. Towne, 26, Penn School Papers, SHC. It is interesting to note that "Old Marcus' " "Massa" was Daniel Pope of the Oaks Plantation. Pope was an important individual in St. Helena's Baptist Church. The Oaks was one of the plantations where Northerners saw so many signs of "ill-treatment," and was referred to as "de cruelest place." Towne Diary, 32–33.

10. Arthur Sumner to Lt. Joseph Clark, January 23, 1863, Penn School Papers, vol. 4 SHC: Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 218; Higginson, *Army Life*, 231–39.

11. Paul Radin, "Status, Phantasy, and the Christian Dogma," in Clifton Johnson, ed., *God Struck Me Dead: Religious Conversion Experiences and Autobiographies of Negro Ex-Slaves* (Nashville: Social Science Institute, Fisk University, 1945), Foreword, i–ix.

12. There is much that is interesting and convincing in Radin's analysis of slave religion. But he does not take into account fully, the effects of slave religion on social cohesion in the quarters. Radin ignores the cultural and communal components of slave religion—its most progressive elements. He apparently views slave religion in mainly Christian terms, referring to the slaves' "sin" and desire for cleanliness and rebirth. The self-doubt and vacillation which he maintains the Christian conversion experience dispelled represents an analysis of the role of Christianity only on one level. It does not take full cognizance of other influences on the development of black religion. Perhaps Radin attributes too much to Christianity, and views the slaves' perception of Christianity too simply. The Gullahs' conception of sin differed from that which the masters attempted to instill. The slaves looked beyond the concept of a personal God, an "other world," a "rebirth," and beyond an attitude toward sin that worked against their interests. We agree with Radin that religion helped the slaves escape "demoralization" and "neurosis." Radin credits this "escape" from the degrading features of enslavement to Christianity. But communal and cultural development also provided that extra layer of faith. His interpretation of the psychological features and effects of the conversion experience would be even more insightful if a broader approach to slave religion were taken. Ibid.

13. John W. Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 377; Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction*, 132; Dorothy Sterling, *Captain of the Planter: The Story of Robert Smalls*, (New York: Doubleday, 1958) 32–33; Ames, *Dixie Diary*, 45; Towne Diary, passim. Northern teachers related that the Gullahs sometimes found ways to gain some literacy during slavery. Two house servants "picked it up from their master's children," letter by letter. Several other people learned from hymn books. Some were never taught but picked up letters "here and there," which enabled them to read "easy sentences." Allen Diary, 62.

14. Berlin, *Freedom: Black Military Experience*, 46–54; Allen Diary, 155; Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 68–70, 75–76, 93–97; Higginson, *Army Life*, 39–40.

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15. Berlin, *Freedom: Black Military Experience*, 54–55; Higginson, *Army Life*, 63, 72, 86–105, 149–50; H. G. Spaulding, "Under the Palmetto," *Continental Monthly* 4 (August, 1963): 202–3; Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 64, 87–93.

16. Higginson, *Army Life*, 46–48, 70–71, 240–41; Spaulding, "Under the Palmetto," 196.

17. Allen Diary, 82–83; Pearson, *Port Royal*, 99, n. 1, 102, 114, 181–82; Charles Nordhoff, "The Freedmen of South Carolina," in Frank Moore, ed., *Papers of the Day* (New York: C. T. Evans, 1863), 4–5; Towne Diary, 14, 21; Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 143–56.

18. Forten, "Sea Islands, Part I, 588.

19. Rupert Holland, ed. *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969; Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1912), 26.

20. Higginson, *Army Life*, 192; Tilden G. Edelstein, *Strange Enthusiasm: A Life of Thomas Wentworth Higginson* (New York: Atheneum, 1970; repr. from 1968 ed.) 257–60.

21. Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 204; Forten, "Sea Islands," Part II, 672; Allen Diary, 164.

22. Botume, *Amongst the Contrabands*, 204.

23. Higginson, *Army Life*, 208.

24. Edelstein, *Strange Enthusiasm*, 257–60 For an enlightening and provoking treatment of "romantic racialism" see George M. Frederickson, *Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), Chapter 4; William Francis Allen, Charles P. Ware, and Lucy M. Garrison, *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: Peter Smith, 1951; repr. from 1867 ed.), 48; Higginson, *Army Life*, 208–9.

25. Rev. Mansfied French to Revs, Whipple and Jocelyn, n. d., AMA.

26. Higginson, *Army Life*, 235.

27. Ibid., 71, 236–38, and his Appendix D, 267–76.

28. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long*, 457.

9. *Folk Religion in the Slave Quarters*

1. Mrs. William R. Wister, "Recollections of a Southern Plantation and School," Penn School Papers, vol. 5, 19, SHC; Rosa B. Cooley, *School Acres*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 148–49; Diary of Laura M. Towne, 52, Penn School Papers, SHC; "The Long Look," 2–3, undated sketch of a former slave, Sam Polite, who lived to be over 100 years old, Penn School Papers, vol. 1, SHC.

2. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, November 11, 1840 and January 7, 1842, 12; October 7, 1859, 271–74, BC; James H. Cuthbert, *Life of Richard Fuller* (New York: Sheldon Co., 1879), 104–5.

3. Cooley, *School Acres*, 148–49; Towne Diary, 52, Samuel Lawton, "The Religious Life of Coastal and Sea Island Negroes," (Ph.D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1939), 61, 69–72; William F. Allen et al., *Slave Songs of the United States* (New York: Peter Smith, 1951; repr. from 1867 ed.) xviii.

4. Thomas J. Woofter, *Black Yeomanry* (New York: Henry Hold, 1930), 243–54; Towne Diary 26, 42; Charlotte Forten, "Life on the Sea Islands," Part II, *Atlantic Monthly* 13 (June, 1864): 672; Edward L. Pierce, "The Negroes at Port Royal, S. C.," Doc. 51 in *Rebellion Record*, ed. Frank Moore, Suppl. 1 (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1871) 305; Lawton, "Religious Life," 54–57, 60–62; Patricia Guthrie, "Catching Sense: The Meaning

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accompanied only by foot and hand rhythms; the service became much more spontaneous, like that in Moving Star Hall.

In the intervening years, this evolution toward more modern forms has continued. Moving Star Hall is no longer being used for the intimate and intense prayer meetings or for the all-night watch meetings attended primarily by the older people. These important gatherings now take place in the larger churches. The Hall is currently home to a younger congregation, a Pentecostal church pastored by David Hunter, a member of one of the families very important to the original book. Here you find, along with more modern gospel songs and sermons, echoes of the old form of worship, but with the accompaniment of snare drum replacing the complex hand and foot rhythms of the shout. In the larger island churches, there is a vigorous contemporary religious culture with gospel choirs, wonderful organ accompaniment, and powerful preachers. But the older, more spontaneous forms of expression—raising a song by the spirit, taking it into a shout, testifying and preaching when moved by feelings—are not so easily integrated into the more formal structure of the service. There is a feeling from some of the younger people that it will be no great loss if this older level of expression dies out completely. One member of Wesley put it most succinctly when he explained, "There is a battle going on in the church now to get rid of all the old-style religion and singing. The battle is going on subconsciously. It's not going on knowingly because if it was put on the table, folk would take another look at it." It is our profound hope that people *will* take another look at it and make sure a place for the older expression remains. For this deepest layer of cultural tradition is marked by great complexity and beauty—the product of generations of community creativity.

In the 1960s the most unusual and modern institution on Johns Island was the Progressive Club, a successful consumers' cooperative owned and operated by some of the poorest people on the island. It contained a large grocery store and the only gym on the island and served as a center for adult education and voter registration.

000 -13% of its residents.

SEA ISLAND RELIGION

795 794 The most dominant institution in Sea Island society is the church. There are numerous churches on each island. These churches are Protestant in denomination and are about equally divided among Methodist and Baptist congregations. These congregations may have as few as forty or as many as two hundred members. Each congregation supports the operational expenses and contributes to the maintenance of the church facility. Ordinarily this facility is a large one room, single floor, cinder block building. The size and renovation are generally determined by the financial resources of the congregation. In some cases, along with renovation the church has been enlarged by one or two rooms.

794 796 Until the late 1950's each congregation tried with all effort to have its own Pastor, but this became increasingly difficult, so today, even the larger membered congregations have reduced their Sunday services to a bi-monthly schedule. The Sunday gathering is really the time of the community's elders. The entire day revolves around church attendance and relaxing in the Spirit of the Lord. Sunday services generally start for the congregation at 11:00 A.M. and concludes near 2:30 P.M. Afterwards there may be elder meetings or evening prayer attended primarily by the senior congregation members. The nature of the Sea Island religions 796

771 [554 islands a man's worth is measured by his religious dedication. This is so much the case, that the question of outgrowing religion, or active versus the inactive participation of the congregation is not a legitimate concern. The practice of weekday religion is more vigorous than the Sunday demonstrations of faith.

Here on the Islands, religion penetrates every aspect of life. It is rare to encounter islanders who are not learned in the scriptures. This includes islanders who because of personal conflicts with the church's institutionalized style, no longer attend Sunday services. The blunt of this disagreement is usually focused at the church's social inactivity; they say the church simply is not doing enough.

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The Church's Doings

795 794 Before the coming of community action programs, helping neighbors in need was the exclusive role of the church. To some extent, the church is still the most active agent in this regard. Whose analysis shows that congregation members make up the policy making bodies of all the community action programs on the island. It appears, now that these program resources are available, the church has taken a more indirect role. Rather than continuing the tradition of neighbor helping neighbor, neighbors in need are now directed to available program resources. When the need is

795 794 outside the realm of the existing programs, the older traditional methods of helping are reenacted.

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The Young Islander and the Church

Gome ta ole timb religion, gome to ole timb religion, gome ta ole timb religion. It be good enoub fer ma mama, it be good enoub fer ma papa, it be good enoub fer me. It be good enoub fer me.

This ole song of religion dedication still has meaning and is still the path taken by younger islanders. But the path these days is not taken without hesitation. Younger islanders spend a great deal of time in discussion of the worths and limitations of the church. The focus of much of this discussion is on the dominance of Elders. The younger islanders feel that the Elders are maintaining the church in the ole manner which excludes their influence. Elders in turn suggest that the practice of religion is a long time faith, that the young ones are recent to their belief and have not paid the religious dues which warrants keeping company (having input into the church) with the ole time practitioners. In spite of the disagreements the young continue to participate in the church.

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SEA ISLAND MAGIC MEDICINE:
A CONSEQUENCE OF NECESSITY

758 759 Sea Islanders have never had ready access to medical personnel. There are only two doctors on the islands. Both the doctors and a new health clinic system are recent to the

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other denominations, I make no attempt to go into a description of usual church observances. My particular concern has been the preservation of the religious slave songs. Those of the Baptist Negroes—the most conservative sect on the Coast of Georgia—give greater evidence than the others of an African background. Coupled as they are with the most picturesque customs, they have come in for special consideration.

Although certain songs are peculiarly appropriate to such occasions as Easter and Communion, they cannot be rigidly classified according to the services which may have inspired them.[1] They were sung at any time, anywhere. The majority of them appear equally suited to church, prayer, and covenant meeting. However, the ceremonies connected with baptism, "settin'-up" with the dead, and burial mean so much to the Negro that a separate section of this Chapter is devoted to each of them. They appear to be connected with customs prevailing a century ago in the section of Africa from which the slaves were obtained. The significance attached to baptism in a river, or immersion on the outgoing tide, may tie up with the initiation rites connected with the river-worship of Dahomey; and anyone who reads what explorers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have to say about the Africans' concern with death will recognize that our Negroes display the same trait.

CHURCH, PRAYER, AND COVENANT MEETING

Patty Gardner[2] used to open the "South End" prayer meeting, held at Deacon Merchant's house, by singing the following song. As the other members joined in, they shook hands ceremoniously with their neighbors assembled in a circle.[3] The younger generation knew nothing of this custom until I had Old Quarterman come to the Cabin and "show them the way."

[1] Some may have come into existence while the slaves were at work—others were undoubtedly conceived under stress of religious emotion. In the old days a deacon, at the peak of his rhythmically chanted prayer, broke into song, in which those present joined. After a verse or two, he continued the prayer, ending his plea for mercy by singing with the others some appropriate slave hymn. It is unfortunate that this highly effective method of rousing the congregation should have lapsed in most churches. Now, the impassioned exhortation ends with a sudden drop into an ordinary conversational tone—like a dash of cold water in the face.

[2] Patty, while singing a religious song at work, would go into a trance-like state. Clarence told me he remembered seeing her moving rhythmically in a circle around her cabin, a dish towel in one hand and a discarded tin can (highly prized in those days) in the other. She dried the can over and over, totally oblivious of time or surroundings.

[3] This procedure is mentioned by Sir Charles Lyell in his Second Visit to the United States.

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BAPTISM

795 533 On a frosty Sunday morning many years ago, I happened to be on the bank of the Frederica River south of the Fort. From a distance I heard the Negroes singing what sounded like a dirge, but as they came closer I found it was a baptismal song, sung by the procession which had formed, as is customary, at the church a mile away.[12] It was headed by the minister, followed by his assistants, the deacons and other members in pairs, while the "candidates" brought up the rear. The girls were dressed in white, but the boys wore ordinary overalls and work shirts. The solemn dignity of the occasion was impressive. Joe Lowman, one of the assisting preachers, with great earnestness addressed the congregation. He exhorted those of his hearers who had not been baptized to take no chances. In an intimate conversational tone he gave his views on the subject. He wanted it clearly understood that he was not prepared to say, "nobody was going to be saved who had only had his head sprinkled"—but he, for one, was not for disobeying instructions. The Lord ordered us to go down into the water, and that was all there was about it. It was like sending a boy to the store for potatoes; if he brought home turnips it would not be the same thing at all.

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After the discourse and the usual prayers,[13] which were punctuated in the African manner with encouraging responses, rhythmically delivered, the officiating minister went down into the river to the spot selected by the deacon, who, with his staff to show the depth, had preceded him. While those on the river bank sang

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[12] Before leaving the church the minister calls his congregation to order, and gives them some last-minute instructions. One cautioned his flock to conduct themselves on the way to the water in an orderly manner befitting the solemnity of the occasion. He said: "Now, I don't want any talkin' or laughin'.—Don' y'u begin to tell about your bean patch an' your peas. This ain' no time for it."

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[13] In a recent book the assertion is made that our Negroes "pray to the river" when they are baptized. This sounds like an African survival until it is learned that "to" means "beside" in this instance. It is no wonder that those who are unfamiliar with our Negroes and their use of words make curious mistakes.

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"Wade in the Water," the candidates, each escorted by a church member, followed to the water's edge. There the girls' skirts were tied above their knees to prevent undignified billowing, and the assisting deacon led each candidate to the spot where the minister stood in about two-and-a-half feet of water.

The Negroes probably follow the usual procedure of white Baptists; however, I find that no two preachers use precisely the same words, though the substance is always the same: "In obedience to the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ I baptize thee"—and at this point the immersion takes place—"in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Amen"—and up comes the sputtering, shivering candidate. When the procession returns to the church, the ones who have just been baptized line up and receive the "right hand of fellowship" from the minister and the church members—and not until then may they consider themselves as safely within the fold.

Although the water was bitterly cold that February morning, the young people behaved very well, and only one squealed a little—which was considered very bad form. If you do not come up like a lamb it is "suspicioned" that your conversion has not been authentic, and the baptism may need to be performed again.

In the old days, when the Negroes were closer to Africa, baptisms in the tidewater section took place punctiliously, no matter how inconvenient the hour, on the outgoing tide.[14] In the interior, of course, where rivers and streams can be depended upon to carry the candidate's sins away from him, a baptism can be safely set for any appointed hour. Now, cement tanks are built in the yards of conventional churches, and another picturesque custom will soon be a thing of the past. Many a time have I gone to the South End or to Frederica, before sunrise, in the hope of learning something new. Something new was not always forthcoming, but the picture in the low morning light was worth going miles to see.

[14] "The stress laid by Negro Baptists upon baptism being performed on the outgoing tide lends support to the theory, held by Melville Herskovits, that the strong adherence to the ritual of baptism among Negro Christians is related to "the great importance of the river-cult in Africa, particularly in view of the fact that, as has often been observed, river-cult priests were sold into slavery in great numbers." (Handbook of Social Psychology.)

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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"preach the funeral," [24] the St. Simon's Negroes would row all the way to Savannah —over eighty miles—to get him. They landed at Frederica, where the First African Baptist Church was located.

At Aaron's funeral Laura gave the time-honored dramatic touch by growing hysterical, throwing up her arms, and screaming: "Good-bye Aaron—y'u gone forever." While the clods were shoveled upon the coffin, singing providentially kept us from hearing the sound. Different men, headed by the undertaker, took turns filling in the grave. The way they joked and laughed as they worked rather shocked me. I understand, however, that Africans show the same levity after distressing occasions.

M. H. Kingsley, in *Travels in West Africa*, mentions the intense love of the African for funerals, and, according to the descriptions given by other explorers, there is a striking similarity in the burial customs of the natives and their rural American cousins. In Africa it is believed that the position of the ghost in the other world requires that the funeral be as expensive as the family can possibly provide. Furthermore, without a fitting ceremony the departed spirit cannot reach its final destination, but lingers among the living, making conditions very uncomfortable for them. The Negroes of our Southern states show the same feeling about funerals. They spare no expense in making them elaborate affairs. One that took place on St. Simon's years ago will long be remembered: "Why, Mrs. Parris', it cost four hundred dollars. They sent to Savannah for flowers, and she was buried in new white slippers that cost six dollars . . . !" I notice that the American Negro, no matter what the work or business in hand, puts it aside for such an event. To pay the cost of a funeral that will be a credit to the corpse as well as his family, the survivors will mortgage what property they may have, if they have not been so provident as to take out an insurance policy, join a "Bury League," or pay to some society or lodge dues which range from ten to twenty-five cents a week.

[24] When Quarterman's son-in-law died, his daughter said to me: "Tell the old man my husband died three weeks ago and the funeral will be preached next Sunday." Then she asked me if I would please give her a black hat. A Northern friend frequently sent me boxes of summer hats in the autumn. If the original owners could have seen them in winter on the dusky wearers, they would have been surprised. The fun of fitting out the singers with becoming hats has always made me wonder if I hadn't missed my calling.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
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out crossing the feet, to the tune of a spiritual. Nor did the Negroes take their violins into the praise houses, for the missionaries also taught them that fiddle music was sinful since the fiddle furnished the tunes for the old dances. The last violin on St. Helena Island before the Civil War is said to have been owned by a Negro on Coffin's Point, but he got rid of it before "big gun shoot," as the Negroes called the battle of Port Royal.

Sir Charles Lyell observed the same kind of religious worship on the Georgia Sea Islands and mainland. "On the Hopeton plantation above twenty violins have been silenced by the Methodist missionaries," he wrote in 1845. "At the Methodist prayer-meetings, they are permitted to move rapidly in a ring, joining hands in token of brotherly love, presenting first the right hand and then the left, in which manœuvre, I am told, they sometimes contrive to take enough exercise to serve as a substitute for the dance, it being, in fact, a kind of spiritual *boulanger* [?], while the singing of psalms, in and out of chapel, compensates in no small degree for the songs they have been required to renounce."[80]

The religious life of the slaves was organized by the whites upon the same plan as their own. On plantations of any size, slaves who had joined the church were formed into a class, at the head of which was one of their own number, acting as deacon or leader, who was also sometimes a licensed preacher.[81] The leader who was the head of the praise house often decided in council with his subordinates, the watchmen, whether a candidate for member-

[80] Lyell, *Second Visit to the United States*, I, 269, 270.
[81] "Negro Slavery at the South," DeBow, *Industrial Resources of the United States*, II, 251.

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ship was worthy of admittance. The Reverend Charles C. Jones, after many years spent in preaching to sea-island and mainland slaves concluded that they were inclined to place true religion in profession, in forms and ordinances, and in excited states of feeling, and true conversion in dreams, visions, trances, and voices, "all bearing a perfect or striking resemblance to some form or type which has been handed down for generations, or which has been originated in the wild fancy of some religious teacher among them."[82] They offered these dreams and visions to the church sessions as evidences of conversion just as the whites were inclined to do in camp meetings.

They were also quick to follow the custom of the whites in "churching" offending members. "The discipline of colored members," wrote the Reverend Mr. Jones, who, no doubt, had taken part on many such occasions, "is involved, tedious, vexatious and disgusting." Excommunications and suspensions were of "perpetual occurrence, for crimes shocking in character, and of themselves sufficient to show the general state of morals; such for example as adultery, fornication, theft, lying, drunkenness, quarreling, and fighting." The Reverend Mr. Jones thought that the Negroes perverted the gospel and colored their religious practices with their African superstitions. Thus their "doctors, prophets, and conjurers" modified the teachings of the white preachers.[83]

The church was not only responsible for giving Christianity to the Negroes, but also to a large extent for teaching a few of them to read and write. The early statutes

[82] Jones, *Religious Instruction of the Negroes*, pp. 125, 126.
[83] *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 127, 128.

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I learned that old Nat's boy, Antony, who wanted to marry Phillis, had given her up and taken Mary Ann, July's daughter, without saying a word to me or any other white man. I called him up to me one afternoon when I was there and told him he must go to church and be married by the minister according to law. He flatly refused, with a good deal of impertinence, using some profane language learned at camp. I thereupon told him he must go home with me, showing him I had a pistol, which I put in my outside pocket. He came along, swearing all the way and muttering his determination not to comply. I gave him lodging in the dark hole under the stairs, with nothing to eat. Next morning old Nat came and expostulated with him, joined by old Ben and Uncle Sam, all of whom pitched into him and told him he was very foolish and ought to be proud of such a chance. He finally gave up and promised to go. So I let him off with an apology. Next Sunday he appeared and was married before a whole church full of people.[48]

But the missionaries found to their sorrow that the Negroes did not always have the proper respect for "a marriage according to law." Limus, a driver, had a wife and grown children on his own plantation and another wife on a plantation nearby. Nevertheless, the missionaries tried to settle such cases with a due regard for the parties concerned and attempted to build up among the people a feeling of family loyalty and pride. They urged the Negroes to buy a table whenever possible and to have regular times for the family meal when all should assemble for the occasion.

Pierce at once opened the two white churches on St. Helena Island which had been closed since "gun shoot." Among the superintendents there were several divinity students and ministers who preached to the Negroes on

[48] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 95.

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Sundays and helped conduct their praise meetings and funerals, but the Negroes were jealous of their praise meetings and did not want any of the whites to attend communion except those who were Baptists. The superintendents organized Sabbath schools so that those who did not attend the regular schools might have an opportunity of learning to read the Bible. It was not uncommon for as many as three hundred to gather at Brick Church on Sunday mornings for instruction.

The "contrabands" took readily to the schools which Pierce established. He attempted to place one teacher on every plantation who should conduct classes several hours a day in the praise house, but there was a great scarcity of teachers, so that on some plantations the people received only such instruction as the superintendents had time to give. Nevertheless, the schools were perhaps the best agents for obtaining the good will of the people. The books and slates which the benevolent societies supplied seemed a proof to them of the Yankees' interest in their welfare. By June, 1863, there were twelve schools in the department attended by 2,500 persons, some of whom were adults who received instruction after their work was done. By the next year there were thirty schools conducted by forty or forty-five teachers, with an average attendance of 2,000 pupils.[48]

The thought of the black folk within the Federal lines at Port Royal eagerly grasping for the crumbs of knowledge so long denied them inspired Whittier to write the following song for the schools of St. Helena Island:

[48] Pierce, *Addresses and Papers*, pp. 107, 108.

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When a person wished to become a member of the church, he must go into seclusion for two or three weeks until he had received a vision that his sins had been forgiven. During this time of seclusion, he was said to be "seeking." Upon the genuineness of his vision the praise leader must pass judgment. Then the candidate must go through the catechism, thoroughly memorizing every sentence, and pass two examinations in the praise house and one in the church before being admitted to baptism. Once admitted, he wore the head cloth of the candidate until the day of baptism which was usually on communion Sunday. Dressed in white robes, the candidates came to the river at high tide to receive the ordinance of baptism. Miss Towne described a baptism in January, 1876, as being lengthy but impressive. Before communion, which preceded the baptismal service, the minister told the church members "that they were not to take a long drink of wine, but a sip only—that he had been told that 'some of they said they meant to get their two cents' worth.' (That is the amount generally subscribed by each to buy the wine.) He told them that was very naughty conduct in church members." The elders, Miss Towne explained, "used to take the first filled cup, throw back their heads, and drain it with gusto. That was their idea of partaking of the Lord's Supper." Communion over, the members filed outside to the river bank and amid prayer and song the candidates were immersed.

As in slavery days, the praise leaders attempted to regulate the affairs of the praise members, so in freedom the officers of the praise houses and the churches sought to regulate all the private and public disputes arising on